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BELFAST**

## **Creative Transformations. Conversations on Determination, Risk, Failure and Unquantifiable Success.**

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# CREATIVE TRANS- FORM- ATIONS

conversations on  
determination, risk, failure  
and unquantifiable success



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council



This publication evolved out of an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded Project Creative Transformations, in the Nature of Creativity Research Networks and Workshop Scheme. The publication was jointly funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Interface, Centre for Research in Art, Technologies and Design, University of Ulster

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# Creative Transformations

conversations on determination, risk,  
failure and unquantifiable success

Ruth Morrow  
Doris Rohr  
Kerstin Mey





#### Acknowledgments

Thanks to all those who contributed to this publication either through case studies and/or essays. Those involved in case studies were involved in several layers of edits and we are grateful for their patience. Particular thanks to Niamh Flanagan for her final editing of Building Bridges Case Study and to Grainne Loughran for proof reading.



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# Contents

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Background	6
The link between Creativity and Transformation	8
Project Strand 1: Creative re/habilitation at the margins of civil society	10
Project Strand 2: The role of creative process in subjective placing of identity, memory, history	13
<hr/>	
Case Studies	16
Springhill Public Art Trail	18
Dúchas Oral History Archive	26
The View from the Hill	34
Playtrail	42
Building Bridges	50
Smile Mile	58
Alphabet Angel	66
A Woman's Part	74
Chaat Masala	82
<hr/>	
Essays	90
On Cultural confinement and playing with the rules. Doris Rohr	92
Wembley Tunnel: the artist role in a critical context. Ciara O'Malley	98
2D / place / memory and some essential elements. Ruth Morrow	100
The Art Of Working Politically. Declan McGonagle	104
Transforming Learning through Critical Reflection. Rosemary Moreland	106
How do we know it works? On the evaluation of creative practices in the public domain. Kerstin Mey	110
<hr/>	
Recommendations	114
<hr/>	
People	122
<hr/>	
Contacts	126
<hr/>	
Selected Bibliography	128
<hr/>	

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# Background

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<sup>1</sup>Taken from the Initial Funding Application for “Creative Transformations” A Project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the Nature of Creativity Research Networks and Workshop Scheme and supported by Interface, Centre for Research in Art, Technologies and Design and the School of Art and Design, University of Ulster.

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*"Following the peace agreement in 1998, Northern Ireland society started to look for ways to move forward. Keen to develop in positive and progressive ways, the contemporary economic and cultural theories offered language and philosophies of "creative societies trading on their creative capital" that were quickly adopted. Most significantly, government policy makers in Northern Ireland produced a series of cross-departmental policy documents focused on the role of creativity:*

*Unlocking Creativity- A strategy for development (2000)*

*Unlocking Creativity- Making it happen (2001)*

*Unlocking Creativity- A Creative region. (2004)*

*These policy documents, whilst acknowledging Northern Ireland's troubled past, did not directly address the impact that long lasting conflict or 'critical societal conditions' have on the creativity of a society. Inherent in creative processes is the ability to challenge the existing and the need for self-expression, yet 'the troubles' created a polarised society, where conservative actions and anonymity became ingrained tactics of survival, preoccupied much of people's creative energies.*

*The mission of the Unlocking Creativity initiative was to "develop the capacities of all our people for creativity and innovation, and so promote and sustain the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of Northern Ireland." Yet the resulting actions and initiatives that have spun out from the policy have offered few actual opportunities to understand creativity within the social wellbeing of Northern Ireland. Creativity in this policy context is understood simply as a way to move beyond Northern Ireland's past rather than a way to deal with and work through its past and present condition productively. It is increasingly acknowledged, however, that rather than having resolved conflict, Northern Irish society is in a state of conflict transformation. This is a condition and process that by necessity demands creative thinking and actions. Amongst some grass roots organisations creativity is therefore understood as a way to:*

*"reflect and give form and place to collective and individual memories and histories, empower society but particularly those people most disenfranchised to articulate their position*

*and act in proactive and constructive ways, help regain optimism: allowing people to understand that looking beyond to other places/times is not just a means to escape but an essential method of remaining creative, open and tolerant."*

With these thoughts a networking project began. The project developed a series of workshops (described in Strand 1 pg 10 and Strand 2 pg 13) providing insight into the extraordinary range of examples of creative practice that exists within communities in Northern Ireland today. As a response to this work, it was decided to capture a range of case studies in a publication, revealing some of the untold stories, efforts, resources, and skills contained across such practices. The Case Studies are surrounded by a group of reflective essays, which tease out the conditions that support and hinder such creative actions, and the publication concludes with a set of recommendations aimed at policy makers, funders, arts organisations, community groups and individual creative practitioners.

The publication aims therefore to publicise and promote this area of community based creative practice; to raise debate around its value; and to fundamentally question the structures that impact on its implementation and future development.

We hope that the publication reflects the enormous range of skill, dedication and creativity that exists within communities in Northern Ireland today. We hope the publication will engender pride, critical reflection, open debate and ensure that such creative practice is valued and supported with the insight and enthusiasm it deserves.

Ruth Morrow, Doris Rohr, Kerstin Mey

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# The Link between Creativity and Transformation

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*"Turning to the issue of funding for the Arts, the Executive recognises the importance of the sector, not just in terms of entertainment and relaxation but also because of the significant potential contribution it can make to our tourist sector and to wider economic growth."<sup>2</sup>*

This excerpt from the 2008-2011 'Budget Announcement to Northern Ireland's Assembly and Population', gives a good indication of how the Arts are sometimes viewed and the roles they are expected to serve. Of course those involved in the Arts would strongly contest that the Arts do more than simply entertain, relax and generate income. They believe that the Arts give society the space to ask questions, challenge perceptions and rethink accepted positions, not only in relation to the world around us but also to the individual worlds within us. Learning how to turn an idea or feeling into something visible or audible, and hence able to be shared and discussed amongst others, also brings about development and transformation in skills and knowledge.

At the heart of all creative practice is the ongoing transformation of creative practitioners and those who participate and/or witness that process. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland acknowledges this trait of creativity in the context of community arts:

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<sup>2</sup>Budget 2008-2011. Statement To The Northern Ireland Assembly By The Rt Hon Peter D Robinson MP MLA Minister For Finance And Personnel, Tuesday, 22 January 2008

<sup>3</sup>Art Form and Specialist Area Policy 2007-2012: Community Arts, Arts Council of Northern Ireland

<sup>4</sup>quote from podcast interview with Shaun Nethercock, Executive Director of the Matrix Theatre. Provoke Internet Radio [www.provokeradio.com](http://www.provokeradio.com) Interview on 11/11/2007 65. The Transformative Power of Creativity: Theatre as Holy Communion

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*"It [community arts] harnesses the transformative power of original artistic expression to produce a range of social, cultural and environmental outcomes" and "Community Arts transforms both individuals and communities"<sup>3</sup>*

It is also widely acknowledged that transformation often happens at the point when the practitioner faces the greatest challenge, and indeed creative practitioners frequently seek out problems or limitations to induce a heightened creative response. During the interview process for one of the case studies, John McCann of Tinderbox Theatre Company said *"You can't do drama without conflict"*. In other words, difficulty, challenges and conflict are at the heart of creative processes. So it is not coincidental that all of the case studies presented in this publication deal with the most sensitive and difficult issues of contemporary society, eg ageism, racism, sectarianism, attitudes to disability etc.

There is, however, some debate around the concept of 'transformation', particularly in a context such as Northern Ireland. People often ask why they need to be 'transformed' and express concerns that creative projects may be used as a subtle form of social manipulation to affect change in communities. However the type of transformation that people experience through a creative process is highly individual, often accompanied by growth in self-identity and a wish to be heard. This is a process more akin to self-politicisation and empowerment and unlikely to be susceptible to external or state manipulation. Transformation can be as simple as *"connecting people to their stories and to their voice"*<sup>4</sup>. It can also transform how they view the places they inhabit and give them confidence to affect positive change – to overcome as creative practitioners do – difficult challenges by using innovative, proactive and often self determined means.

Through the process of researching and collating this publication we have come to understand Creativity as:

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*a process that recognises and accepts challenges, with a confidence borne out of skills, knowledge and reflection, that results in a transformative outcome*

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This publication sets out to explicitly demonstrate through selected case studies that Creativity does not only exist in the traditional model of the Arts, nor indeed within the economic models that value entrepreneurship, innovation or the rise of the 'Creative Class'. But that Creativity also has an important role in the development of a healthy society that can face challenges, act proactively and seek positive outcomes. The act of demonstrating and facilitating Creativity at grassroots levels, (through such projects as listed in this publication), allows Creativity to grow as a fundamental civil skill. [RM]

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# Project Strand 1:

## Creative re/habilitation at the margins of civil society

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This workshop strand arose from initial discussions between the then Deputy Governor of HMP Maghaberry, the Prison Arts Foundation and Interface, Centre for Research in Art, Technologies and Design at the University of Ulster in Spring 2005. The collaboration developed gradually based on a shared understanding of the need for change in the function of prisons: from an emphasis on the protection of society from criminals and their punishment in the institution, through a limitation of individual freedom and civil rights, to a proactive rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders. This included a conviction that change can only be achieved through a holistic approach involving all constituencies of the prison, the actual physical environment and the institution's external stakeholders. The arts, in the sense of creative engagement, stimulation of communication and negotiation of value and identity, were considered as a crucial means to scrutinize the institution and its procedures and to affect lasting attitudinal change in all who share this environment.

On this premise it was agreed that a series of workshops should be directed at the transformation of the Reception area. This is the place where remand and sentenced prisoners first encounter the institution. It is the area where they are registered, searched, drug tested, 'inducted' and wait to be sent to the houses (prison accommodation). Here, they must pass through on their way to court, or when they go to and return from home visits. Their personal belongings are taken off them there and handed back on

release. Reception is staffed continuously and operates 24/7, governed by strict protocols and procedures and with the support of the Security Unit during the times of prisoners' collection for and 'delivery' from court visits.

As the face of the institution, the Reception area was identified as a site in need of change to communicate to both prisoners and staff the different philosophy and approach to the workings of the institution. It was agreed that the constituencies had to be given some responsibility and ownership for these changes.

Therefore the series of workshops in Spring 2007 aimed to bring together prisoners, prison officers and prison administrators in a considered manner to engage in a creative exchange about the prison environment, employing visual images, material objects and spatial design. By stimulating, assessing and providing creative skills and experience, participants were encouraged to articulate how they would like to see the physical prison. They were encouraged to play an active part in the re-development and design of their environment from an early stage in the planning process; environment changing within the framework of its intended functionality. Through creative processes and a participatory and inclusive design approach, the project sought to empower staff and prisoners to affect a transformation of self and of the nature of the social relationships in the prison. The workshops were intended to make a significant contribution to the re/building of collective confidence in order to benefit the social rehabilitation of offenders and ultimately promote civil responsibility in both the individual prisoners and staff.

To manage the encounter between staff and inmates outside of the established institutional protocols, processes and hierarchies, it was decided to phase them in through the stages of the creative design work. Therefore, two groups were set up initially, one consisting of officers working in Reception and elsewhere, and administrators volunteered by the management, and one group of prisoners who had already been working with the Education Department.

The workshops for both groups, which took place on a weekly basis and lasting 90 mins, were designed progressively and symmetrically as outlined below:

- I) Briefing meeting: Project briefing of groups – familiarisation with Reception - questionnaire
- II) Brainstorming: How could /should the Reception area change? Initial 2D sketches
- III) 2D realisation: Ideas from session II – Development of proposal
- IV) 3D realisation
- V) 3D realisation
- VI) Joint meeting of project groups – Introduction and discussion of models – selection of best design(s) by an independent jury
- VII) Final design through forming of a joint project group of representatives or by each working group
- VI Debriefing

As it was deemed critically important for the project to have an incentive, assurance was given by the prison management that the best proposal would be considered for realisation and that the working group(s) would have a stake in that process.

In reality, without the preparatory work and continued organisational support on the inside of the institution provided by the Prison Arts Foundation artist in residence, Ciara O'Malley, it would have been far more difficult and complex for Interface to realise these workshops, if at all. In the end it proved impossible to sustain the staff group due to the workshop being timetabled in their lunch break, staff shift rota, and overarching security issues that prevented regular access to the prison environment. Whilst the prisoner group engaged with the project throughout its devised development cycle, notwithstanding similar security matters and irregular access to the workshop/education area, the staff group discontinued after the detailed exploration of the Reception area.



The workshop planning had to be altered at an early stage allowing more time for discussion and for the development of two-dimensional ideas, sketches and collages.

The construction of three-dimensional models proved demanding and concentrated on the holding cells. The prisoner group suggested to develop another questionnaire to involve all of the constituencies beyond in the consultation on the perception, functions, uses of and changes to reception area. Taking into account literacy issues amongst the prisoner population, two different questionnaires were produced and distributed amongst staff in the Reception area and in the houses as much as possible given the institutional restraints and limit of time resources on the part of our major support, the artist in residence. Their results supported a final report for the prison management including a set of recommendations for:

- alterations to the physical structure – moving the shower facilities across the corridor
- changes of the appearance – through new colour scheme and lighting
- ergonomically improved staff desk/work areas
- improved holding cells
- people-centred and effective communication strategy
- services including the access to water and the improved provision of food through for instance vending machines.

The recommendations were almost completely accepted and a follow up set of workshops agreed for 2008 to implement the changes. These will be carried out as far as possible with the initial group of prisoners. [KM]

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# Project Strand 2:

The role of creative process in  
subjective placing of identity,  
memory, history

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The workshop strand grew out of an interest in subjectivity, by which is meant an interest in how individuals reflect on their past, rather than wholesale versions of official history. What creative processes could be useful to examine this rather wide area further? In the workshop practices drawn on in community arts and in community and adult education, methods like storytelling, creative writing, drama, photo reminiscence work, quilt and mosaic production, are often used when addressing the role of personal and collective memory. An underlying assumption would be that these processes would aid individual and inter-social relationships, to (self)assess and develop the sense of self in presumed community environments, in the specific social and historical contexts of Northern Ireland.

The strand set out to investigate further through networking, seminar and roundtable discussion, and through observational processes, the methods and objectives of such processes. The strand evolved in collaboration with Community Arts Forum<sup>5</sup> as project partner, and through the critical involvement of Healing Through Remembering<sup>6</sup>.

**Aims:**

- To test and build on existing programmes, concepts of delivery and knowledge (in partnership with CAF/HTR and potential other organisations)
- To advance expertise on methodologies appropriate for context (therapy, trauma, memory workshops etc.) and to develop a sense of a pedagogy of transformative creativity
- To contribute to knowledge by adding critical dimension and evaluation from the academic perspective (Interface/UU)

**Objectives:**

- To identify and begin to map workshop models of good practice currently used in NI
- To add to content, structure and processes of such workshops through critical reflection and through interdisciplinary specialist discourse
- To relate theory and practice in a symbiotic relationship, so that theory critiques and reflects on working practice, and practices test the assumptions, language and perspective of critical thinking
- To contribute to the establishment or consolidation of networks with the view to create future innovative transformative creative project work of long term benefit to communities

**Purpose of research:**

- Critical evaluation of community arts practices and methodologies
- Constructive reflection process of how individuals within and beyond the boundaries of their respective communities process the past imaginatively to gain awareness of present position

**Timescale and Process:**

In November 2006 a series of informal initial meetings with Heather Floyd (CAF), Niamh Flanagan (CAF), Claire Hackett (HTR/Falls Council) and Doris Rohr (Interface) established

a consensus to focus research on agency and human creative ability to promote positive change ('healing', creativity, innovation). These are qualities not easy to measure, and the focus on such subjective, 'intangible' aspects of the work emphasised the need for a qualitative research study that would address and counterbalance a drive to measure results quantitatively in order to satisfy funding conditions.

It was agreed with CAF, to select the workshop programme 'A Woman's Part' as a project for this study. The workshop examines the role of women who were actively engaged as citizens during the period of civic conflict in Northern Ireland. The workshop emphasised the transformative and active role of women, challenging a stereotypical assumption of women as peacemakers. The cross-community project has evolved with the help of facilitators Orla McKeagney (Drama Therapist) and Ruth Walsh (Creative Writer) utilising creative writing and drama as a means of developing reflection processes, dialogue and non-verbal communication amongst the participants.

The research study evolved organically, attempting to address changes and needs voiced by the workshop organisers and facilitators. A contract was drawn up between the two partners CAF and Interface<sup>7</sup> to agree on ethical conduct. The overall research activities of Creative Transformations were monitored by an external advisory board (first meeting 12 January 2007). Research strand 2 was monitored through a series of steering group meetings attended by a researcher in February and May 2007. Arising from this it was agreed that Interface would host a facilitation and support workshop with EJ Havlin (Consultant) in April 2007.

The observational role of the researcher allowed for limited participation in the process. A key area of involvement was to set up a seminar, which had been separately funded through Cultural Development of University of Ulster. The Seminar 'Making visible' (May 2007) was to represent and evaluate workshop-in-progress 'A Woman's Part' alongside three other

projects ('Smile Mile' Prison Arts Foundation/ see case study; 'Whose Voice is it anyway', an artist-facilitated workshop-in-progress with immigrants developing media production skills (Haughey/Bosch at Interface/ UU) and 'We'll never be the same: considering trauma and recovery in the transition from conflict' with Rosie Burrows). The seminar focussed on creative strategies to give greater ownership and visibility to non-academic creative community developments. It allowed for a wider discussion of the theme and context of research across a range of representatives from academic, community arts practice and statutory backgrounds, alongside providing access to students with a specialist interest in art in public. It allowed some of the women participants of 'A Woman's Part' to test their drama performance in progress to a new and different audience.

A finalised public drama performance and publication of stories and other forms of creative writing formed the outcome of the CAF project 'A Woman's Part' in September 2007 at Linenhall Library. (More detailed information see case study 'A Woman's Part' in this publication). [DR]

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<sup>5</sup> Community Arts Forum: [www.caf.ie](http://www.caf.ie)

<sup>6</sup> The organisation 'Healing Through Remembering' focuses on how to deal with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. [www.healingthroughremembering.org](http://www.healingthroughremembering.org)

<sup>7</sup> Interface, Centre for Research in Art, Technologies and Design, School of Art and Design, University of Ulster. [www.interface.ulster.ac.uk](http://www.interface.ulster.ac.uk)

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# Case Studies

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## Introduction

The workshop strands provided insight into the extraordinary range of examples of creative practice that exist within communities in Northern Ireland. As a consequence it was decided to document and capture some of the case studies presented at the workshops and use growing contacts to help identify other potential case studies. At a certain point the project broke free of this 'net of contacts' and used the Community Arts Forums email newsletter to put out a call to others in the sector for appropriate case studies. From these proposals we were able to select two additional projects.

The selection criteria were:

- must be complete:
- was/is 'visible': this could mean that the outcomes (and/or process) were on permanent or temporary display (in community, in publication, exhibition, library, website etc) and visible to people beyond those directly involved in project.
- involved creativity
- was 'transformative' (this was understood in a variety of ways from affecting an individual's view of themselves to a community's view of others)
- located in NI

The nine case studies selected for inclusion in this publication represent current practice and were chosen to illustrate the diversity and scope of such work across Northern Ireland. They cover: Older participants, Children and Young People, People with Disabilities, People with Behavioural Needs; Projects rooted in Locality, Others linked to Specific User Groups; Two-Dimensional work, Sculpture, Space-Making, Drama and Dance; Small Scale Short-term to Large scale Long-term; top down and bottom up initiatives.

This publication represents a modest start to the documentation of such work but with the appropriate amount of time and resources it could be replicated many times over with case studies that equate in quality and diversity to the case studies represented here.

### **Format of Case Studies**

The case studies were examined through interview and any related documentation (funding applications / evaluation reports etc). The information obtained was then formatted into a generic fact file format. Fitting such a diverse range of case studies into a fixed format has at times been challenging but we hope it allows the reader to gain a concise understanding of the type of work that exists and some general comparisons across the sector.

Certain sections of the case study fact files speak for themselves i.e.: Project Description, Objectives, Outcomes, Project Partners: Location: Timescale, but other sections need a little explanation of use and significance:

**Contact:** This was the person involved in the interview who (in most cases) represented one of the key partners in the case study project. Within the limits of the project resources we focused our contact to the projects through one person. We acknowledge that with more resources we would have achieved a more rounded view of each case study by interviewing more people associated with it. However within the scope of this publication we were not intending to attempt a critical evaluation of each individual project but rather a comparative overview of the sector. The contact person was involved in extensive editorial feedback on their case study.

**What initiated the Project?** Interesting to note how projects began – whether they were driven by individuals, funding streams or committees.

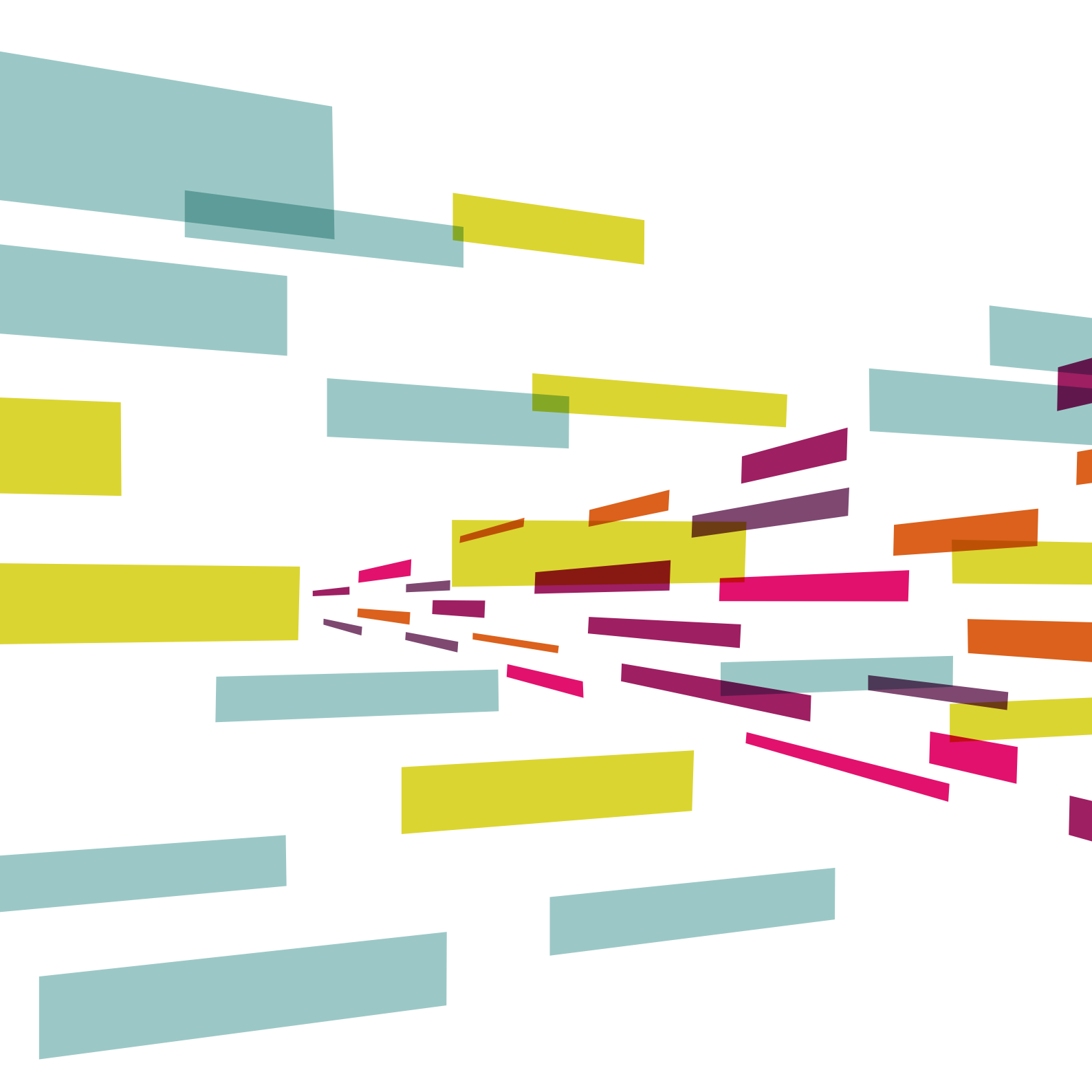
**Intangible Outcomes:** Whilst ‘Outcomes’ can invariably be predicted at the beginning of a project, this section ‘Intangible Outcomes’ reveals some of those that were unforeseen. Over the course of compiling the case studies we have come to understand the ‘intangible outcomes’ as the ‘iceberg phenomenon’ of this area of creative practice. Interestingly they represent outcomes that 1. impact significantly on the participants, 2. are the most difficult to ‘measure’ and 3. Invariably fall outside the normal definition of creative products. We therefore consider them to be significant outcomes of such creative practice.


**Funding:** It is interesting to note the scale of funding across the various case studies, the funding bodies and the number of funders that some projects turn to.

**Participants and Process:** It is difficult to separate people from actions, particularly in such people-centred activities so they are brought together in this single category.

**Evaluation:** This was simply to chart the type and range of evaluation that each case study relied on, rather than to make any value judgement on their successes or failures. Occasionally though we have included a few participant comments.

**Sustainability:** This category is an attempt to tease out whether the case studies show any indications of being sustainable; ie having a life in another format or have had any longer term impact,



The background of the entire page is composed of numerous overlapping, semi-transparent rectangular and polygonal shapes in a variety of colors including shades of purple, magenta, pink, orange, yellow, teal, and brown. These shapes are scattered across the white background, creating a dynamic and layered visual effect.

Case Study One

# Springhill Public Art Trail



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# Springhill Public Art Trail:

a project by Upper Springfield Development Trust

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Contact

**Deirdre Mackel**

Arts Programme Manager Upper Springfield  
Development Trust (USDT)

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*The project was initiated  
by local residents who  
wanted to tackle the  
environmental degradation  
of this area and help improve  
the overall appearance.*

---

## **Project Description:**

The Public Art Trail, facilitated by Upper Springfield Development Trust, is a phased project with various stages of completion. It began with a wall mural *Tá ár gCultúr beo* at the top of Springhill Avenue, followed by carved stone seat *Cloch na n-Aislingí – The Seat of Dreams*; Bronze Plaques storyboard *Tír na N'óg* inserted into playground in Springhill Park; and a Celtic Cross mosaic on gable end of Springhill residential property. These elements have gradually become part of a recognised Art Trail for the local area.

All of the stages of the project were completed in negotiation with and participation of the local community, facilitated by lead artists known and/or living in area through a range of workshops. *"Artistic expression can be a participative process."* (DM)

## **What initiated the Project?**

Residential awareness of "problem areas" (i.e. vandalism, joyriding) and a wish to take greater pride in residential environment. A 'Needs Survey' had been carried out in area prior to mural painting (which was first art piece in the trail).

**Objectives:**

This project sits within the overall aims of the Upper Springfield Development Trust i.e. *"To work towards the sustained social, economic, physical, cultural and environmental regeneration"*<sup>6</sup>. One of the ways the USDT achieves this objective is to work through the Arts, facilitated through an Arts Programme Manager.

- Awareness raising of arts locally
- Enable local people to creatively participate through the development of their environment
- Community development through art
- Special focus on art in public space for last nine years

**Outcomes:**

The creation of a Public Art Trail made up of different and diverse elements that transform the local environment visibly, engendering a sense of identity and pride in locality and enhancing inter-community relationships. The creation of the physical trail has become linked to and in turn reinforces the community's temporal/ seasonal activities through links to festivals.

**Intangible Outcomes:**

In general the process of creating a Public Art Trail has

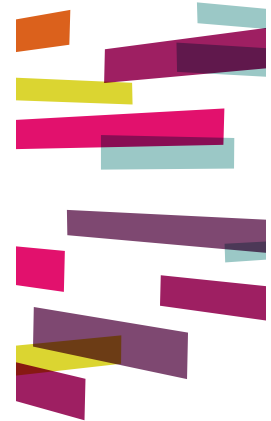
- Had a positive impact on vandalism and misuse of environment
- Instilled a sense of ownership on locality and growing pride in place
- Kept local and cultural memories alive
- Raised cross generational awareness
- Promoted understanding of cultural diversity in community
- Created skills transfer (painting, stone carving, mosaic, team working, communication, negotiation and presentation skills)
- Promoted a positive image of area to outsiders/tourists: *"show casing ourselves"*

Local people have started to think of art as a way to address social problems. For example there is a current proposal for the development of a community sculpture garden, which will also, in part, address anti-social behaviour that has taken place over that area of the community park.

**Funding:**

National Lottery / Arts Council NI, Belfast City Council, Lloyds TSB, Creating Common Ground Consortium *"New Development Fund"* (Housing Executive, Groundwork NI).

Total funding: approx. £10,000 (this included workshop fees, materials, artist fees and project realisation).



**Project Partners:**

USDT/Deirdre Mackel  
(Arts Programme Manager).

**The following partners gave time and support to the project:** Springhill and Springmadden Residents Associations, Community Watch, Springhill House, Springhill Youth, Frank Cahill Resource Centre.

**Artists involved:**

Gerard Mo Chara Kelly (Mural: *Tá ár gCultúr beo*)  
Mark Anthony Grimley (Stone Seat:  
*Cloch na n-Aislingi – The Seat of Dreams*)  
Raymond Watson (Bronze plaques *Tír na N'óg*)  
Michael Baker (Celtic Cross)

**Location:**

The Upper Springfield area has suffered extensively due to the conflict from both the physical and psychological effects of years of intense violence. The effects of the conflict are manifest due to the physical blight, high numbers of people who are victims of conflict and a high ex-political prisoner population. The area continues to suffer from high levels of social and economic deprivation. Springhill Avenue (the first site in the art trail) was the original venue for the famous Springhill festival.

**Timescale:**

Project started in 2002 (4 elements completed)  
There is ongoing project development, currently planning an international exchange with mural painters from Orgosolo in Sardinia with the local mural painters in Upper Springfield.

**Participants and Process:**

Local people were the prime audience and participants and all elements of the art trail were supported by a cross section of local residents. The project was initiated by local residents who wanted to tackle the environmental degradation of this area and help improve the overall appearance. This led to consultation with Residents Association and Housing Executive. The project brief was developed from suggestions made through Residents Association and project realisation involved local youth groups.

The arts programme manager was there to ensure that funding conditions were adhered to and the original brief was followed, but the detailed project briefs arose out of workshops with the local participants. Format, content and preferences towards artistic styles were left to the group. The artists worked with the youth groups through workshops. Each stage involved approx 12 participants and 2/3 volunteers and youth workers as support.

Public Art Trail: Mural age 7-12,  
Stone Seat age 14-18, Mosaic  
Celtic Cross age 14-16 and Bronze Plaques  
inserted in playground age 5-7.

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<sup>s</sup> Upper Springfield  
Development Trust  
Mission Statement

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**Evaluation:**

On such a limited budget (£10,000) no formal evaluation of the art trail has been possible. As an organisation, USDT collects information about the nature and degree of community involvement (numbers/age groups of participants) and it moves forward by building a track record of successful project management and financial transparency. Success of individual projects is judged by community involvement and ongoing sense of ownership, pride and responsibility. Along the way such objects and spaces become embedded into the fabric and life of the community. Evaluation and feedback works at local levels due to the level of integration of USDT in the local communities.

**Sustainability:**

The Art Trail is an ongoing sequence of projects. Currently, a further project is anticipated: i.e. the development of a local Community Sculpture Garden. This organic growth suits small amounts of funding but being part of an art trail helps to create a coherent identity for the community- reflected in its inclusion in the West Belfast Tourist Map and the Shankhill and West Belfast Arts and Heritage Trail. In this way the Art Trail demonstrates a good model for sustainable growth.














Case Study Two

# Dúchas Oral History Archive



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# Dúchas Oral History Archive:

a project by Falls Community Council

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Contact:

**Claire Hackett**

Dúchas Oral History Archive,  
Falls Community Council  
[www.fallscouncil.com](http://www.fallscouncil.com)

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*The Dúchas archive has an approach that distinguishes it from an academic archive, since it is community based, community centred, site specific, sensitive to locale and accountable to participants.*

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## **Project Description:**

The Oral History Archive exists as a funded organisation since 1999 (the idea initiated in 1997) and aims to broaden views and thoughts about conflict by collecting the memories and life histories of people connected to the West Belfast community. Whilst the core group of contributors originate from West Belfast, contributions from individuals from other communities have been added to the interview bank. It is envisaged in the long term that other oral history contributions with an emphasis on experience throughout the period of conflict in Belfast/Northern Ireland could be added to the database.

As part of the process, community volunteers have also been trained as co-researchers and at certain times the archive has acted as the site for commemorative events, often bringing diverse groups together.

The archive contains audio recordings and transcripts on a computer database, currently accessible via appointment with Falls Community Council. Some wider distribution of material via web and a dedicated interpretation centre are envisaged, but currently not yet available.

## **What initiated the Project?**

1994 ceasefires created a desire to record the history of the conflict from the local community, to preserve views and experiences of the community for future generations. In the coordinator's words the archive contains a database of an "experience we need to tell" to present to an "audience for the future." This project was initially research-led and focused on defining events of the conflict such as 1969

burnouts etc.. This gradually changed towards life history approach in which interviewees referred back to their childhood experience and life long memories.

### **Objectives:**

To present memories and alternative history/ies of the conflict as experienced in West Belfast, giving a specific nationalist community experience a voice and through this process, reach out to other communities.

*"Make history available to everyone else"* (CH)

To give ownership to one's history. To transform views held of history within and beyond the knowledge of the community. To contribute the collective gathering of individual histories as a *"gift to history"*, and through this to future generations and a wider group of people interested in the history of the Conflict.

Three overriding objectives are:

- Peace building/conflict resolution
- Educational (for the future)
- Economic (archive to be part of St Comgall's reconstruction and regeneration project in West Belfast)

The Dúchas archive has an approach that distinguishes it from an academic archive, since it is community based, community centred, site specific, sensitive to locale and accountable to participants.

### **Outcomes:**

A community based living archive of oral history (ongoing)

### **Intangible Outcomes:**

The process of putting the archive together:

- Makes history visible, gives people a voice and finds a way to communicate history and memories.
- Creates dialogue about history
- Develops a sense of agency and confidence through process of telling story.
- Creates network across communities, bringing together people from diverse social, political or geographical backgrounds (through training programme with skills transfer, and through commemorative events celebrating contribution of archive contributors who have passed away).
- Provided some community volunteers with training as co-researchers.
- Is transformative towards peace process- getting community to work through past and to anticipate next stage of process by consciously embracing their own history and version of historical events.



**Project Partners:**

In initial pre-funded phase the project had two people, Ciaran Quinn and Eileen Howell concerned with defining the project. Claire Hackett with Mairéad Gilmartin were the first funded caseworkers, following a successful bid with PEACE I. New project worker is Lisa Moody, from 2007.

Initial set up phase had an advisory group: people who would work voluntarily to advise on the project (community workers, academics, media etc). The advisory group was important to set up scope and ethics of project.

**Funding:**

PEACE 1 Funding was favourable towards this type of project. An initial sum £60-80,000 was allocated towards salaries of 2 project workers and project management. Continuity funding is an ongoing issue for Dúchas, and at times the project workers have to live with insecurity for own salary. Other funders have included Department of Foreign Affairs, Belfast Regeneration Office Neighbourhood Renewal etc. Currently one salaried post is funded until March 2008.

**Location:**

Falls Community Council,  
275-277 Falls Road, Belfast, BT12 6FD.  
Email    lisa@fallscouncil  
            claire@fallscouncil  
Website: [www.fallscouncil.com](http://www.fallscouncil.com)

**Timescale:**

Initial concept for the oral history project goes back to 1997. The project was successful in attracting funding in 1999 and it is ongoing, though funding has not been continuous.

**Participants and Process:**

Project participants are mostly from the local community, and so far about 100 interviews have been recorded and are located on the Dúchas database. Normally interviews are recorded in a dialogue format, one to one. Interviewees are mostly identified through local contacts and word of mouth. Sometimes Falls Community Council approaches people who have high community standing and hence credibility in the views of locals. When leaders in the community are interviewed then it can encourage others to give their personal histories to a publicly accessible oral archive. Some additional interviews resulted from a training initiative, which the archive initiated during the earlier funding period of its existence. Others have approached the archive to be included, and the view is to welcome all interviews provided that experience is relevant to the wider focus of the project.

People living in the community were also given opportunity to train as co-researchers in the project – four training events occurred, helping to increase the number of interviews and making the process more democratic; 50% of trainees produced interviews that were added to the archive.

The project audience is both the community in West Belfast and wider audiences locally and internationally.



### Evaluation:

There has been no formal evaluation. However the archive was assessed and accepted by Queens University Belfast, RASCAL project (Research and Special Collections Available Locally).

The advisory group acted as a feedback mechanism to the initial set-up phase. Claire Hackett is a member of the organisation Healing Through Remembering, (chair of subgroup: story telling). In this capacity she is part of the ongoing debate about how processes of commemoration, story telling and oral history should be evaluated and what impact they may have on the community and future generations.

### Sustainability:

In the future the archive will be integrated and developed as part of the proposed St Comgall's conflict resolution centre – a local history and interpretation centre for community and visitors. It is also planned to make the archive available through the Internet

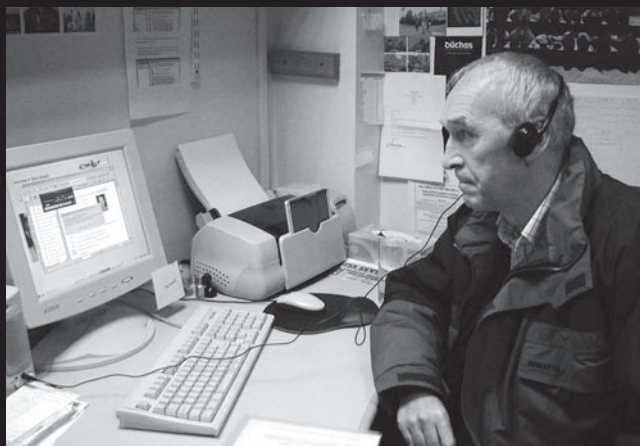
Dissemination also occurs in different formats (publications, video, DVD etc) for a range of contexts and publics: To date these include: Claire Hackett, *"Narratives of political activism, from women in West Belfast"*, in L. Ryan, M. Ward (eds.) *Irish Women and Nationalism* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press 2004)

*"Belfast 1969"*, extracts from the Falls Community Council Dúchas archive, in *Cartography: The City* published by Catalyst Arts. Nov 2000


*"Memories of the hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981"* A recording from the Dúchas oral history archive, Falls Community Council. Duration: 11minutes and 38 seconds. Format: CD

*"Burned Out"* This short film focuses on the events of August 1969 in West Belfast. Duration: 11minutes. Format: video (transfer to DVD underway).

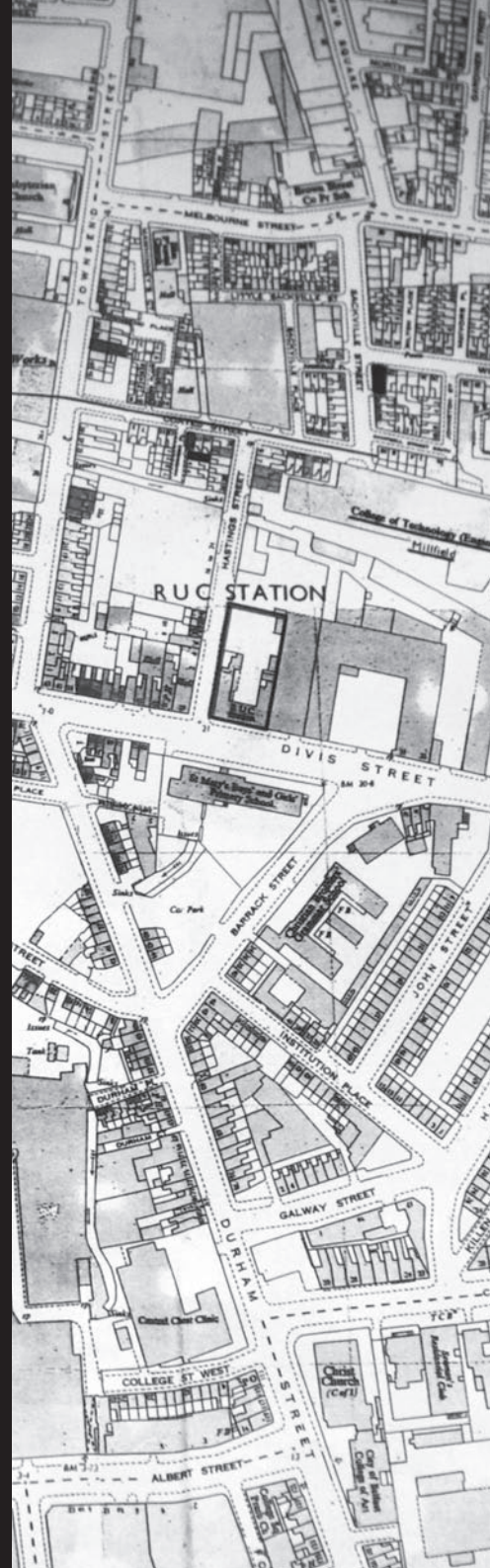




# CONTRIBUTOR PERMISSION FORM

<p>Contributor's Name <i>Don Ford</i></p> <p>Address <i>74 Forest Hwy Stoughton, MA 01972-0100</i></p> <p>Declaration by contributor I agree that these recordings being deposited in the Folio are being made and used by Clarion for educational, research and non-profit purposes.</p> <p>Special conditions (if any)</p> <p>Contributor's signature <i>Don Ford</i></p> <p>Witness's Name <i>Clara Hubbard</i></p>	<p>Declaration by Clarion Folio Community Council We thank you for allowing us to place the following recordings in our collection. We agree that the recordings will only be used for educational, research and non-profit purposes.</p> <p>Signed on behalf of Clarion <i>Clara Hubbard</i></p> <p>Action Required Number Date of recording 1/1/82</p> <p>Duplicates required <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Duplicates completed <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Checkboxes checked (if any)  <input type="checkbox"/> 16mm film  <input type="checkbox"/> 8mm film  <input type="checkbox"/> 35mm film  <input type="checkbox"/> audio  <input type="checkbox"/> video  <input type="checkbox"/> other</p>	 <p>4-1-82 To Forest Hwy Stoughton, MA 01972-0100</p> <p>Don, please remember, you like that 25th Jan recording while I was in the hospital. I had some messages on my recorder. I got back from leaving town. I was told the American band will be coming the following week. Sincerely, Don Ford</p> <p>Stoughton Community Council 25007 State St Stoughton</p>
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275 CITY FALLS ROAD





Want to start by asking you where and when you were born?

*I was born in Hannabstown on the First of the Seventh, 1944.*

Had you any brothers and sisters?

How many of you were there?

*There were five brothers and five sisters.*

All together?

*Oh huh. And I had another sister who died when she was three months old in Hannabstown, which we really know nothing about, it was away before my time. So it's actually five brothers and five sisters.*

And whereabouts did you come?

*I came seventh.*

Right, just a bit more than in the middle. Did you grow up your whole childhood in Hannabstown?

*I think round about the time it changed I was near seven years of age. And then we moved from Hannabstown to the Whiterock bungalows, which would be round about '49, the start of '50.*

Joe, when and where were you born?

*It's a long time ago now. 19th of May. My 81st birthday is next Saturday. 1920. I was born in 60 Divis Street. I was there right up till I was arrested.*

At the age of...

*Twenty-one. I went to school in the Christian Brothers School in Divis Street. I remained in school till I was 14 and allowed to leave school. I hated school.*

Did you?

*I did. I just didn't like school. I left the day I was 14 and I'll tell you a story about this. My father was a printer, had his own small business. And naturally—I was the oldest of the family—I was interested in the printing trade, and from I was no height I'd be involved in it, and I was able to do a fair amount of the work that my father was doing. He wasn't well, and he said to me, 'Boy, I think you'll take the day off school today. I have a couple of jobs for you there, and I'm not able for the machine.' I said, 'Do you know what day this is?' 'Aye, I know it's Tuesday. Or whatever day it was, I don't remember what day it was.' 'I know, but this is my fourteenth birthday.' He said, 'What about it?' I says, 'I'd like to leave school.'*

*We lived above the shop. My mother and father had a power over about it and said it's entirely up to yourself, but we would like to see you staying at school for the purpose of education, all that sort of thing. And I wasn't interested in school. I never did well in exams. I was inclined to be nervous at school, and particularly when it came up to exams. I would just scrape through the exams. And I was glad to get the opportunity to leave school.*

*Where and when were you born?*

*From where we are actually sitting now, 120 yards away across the road, in old Willowbank. Old Willowbank was a private estate owned by a family called Easdale. Old Mr Easdale, I remember him when I was five to seven years of age, he was a former wealthy Belfast businessman, and probably business family. But when I saw him, he was in his eighties, and he was wearing the traditional blue suit of those days, and he was carrying a gold-headed walking stick, not a curved handle, but a knob handle. That was probably quite a pricey item in those days, if you just saw the knob of the handle. The other thing was a blackthorn stick. His traditional beagear was the typical Orangeman's bowler hat, but he was never an Orangeman. If you were looking at newsreels of London in the 1950's, all the big office types in London were wearing the blue suits and the bowler hats. It was traditional.*

*They say, from the limited amount that I can remember, that he was a grumpy old man, unless there were one or two people he was particularly fond of, and then he wasn't so grumpy.*

*So that was his trademark?*

*That was his trademark. The last time I remember seeing him—before I go on to that particular point, Willowbank was a green space, maybe 20 acres, which included a brick structure called The Globe Steam Laundry. And that did not just clothing for a lot of Belfast, but probably for half the North of Ireland as well, because they had a fleet of about 20 horsedrawn two-wheel carts. They went all over Belfast. And they had two motorised vans which did the rest of the North of Ireland. Those vans left in the morning sometime around half-eight, nine o'clock, and were back here, six o'clock in the day. On certain occasions the van would have been back lunchtime and put a load in and then gone off again, and in that case it would have been back seven o'clock. There is a*

*Sister, for the archive could you tell me when and where you were born?*

*I was born a long time ago in Eyrecourt Co Galway. It's a very gauledd part of Galway, there is a lot of Protestants. And we got on very well with them for my grandmother was a Protestant and she ran away with my grandfather and became a Catholic. The family didn't like it and they upped and moved to Australia. One of them came here to see me a few years back. An old man.*

*What relation would he have been to you?*

*He'd have been a first cousin. But they were so upset because she became a Catholic. She was a great woman, a great strong woman with great devotion to the Stations of the Cross.*

*She made a really good Catholic then... Did they stay in Galway then?*

*Yes. They had a farm in Renmount Hill, Eyrecourt. My father was married twice and my mother was married twice. My father, his wife died and he married my mother. And then he died, and my mother got married to a Cosgrove. His brother was an MP with Redmond here in the House of Commons.*

*That would have been the old Irish Parliamentary Party he was*

*I was born in Dunlewey Street in Belfast on the 29th of January 1950. A Falls Road woman born and bred, and never moved off it. I went to St Katherine's Primary School. I went then up to St Dominic's School, and then I went to St Mary's Training College. And then I moved up the road, and I live up the road... And I taught in St Gall's Schools for 20 years.*

*When and where did you meet Michael?*

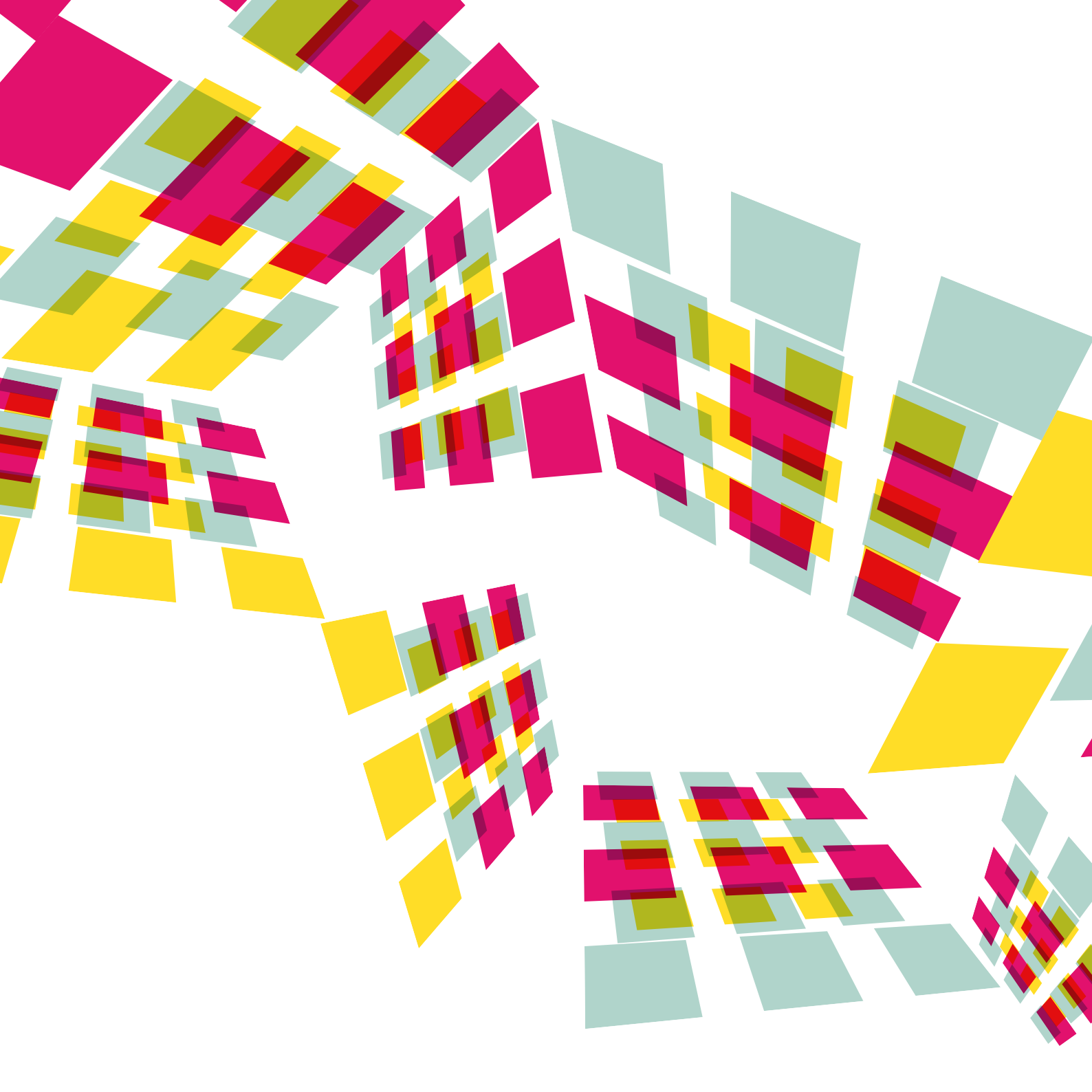
*Michael went to St Thomas's School. My brother went to St Thomas's. And he also played, and still trains, with St Gall's GAC. And my mother's people, the McGlones, were St Gall's GAC people. So my mommy worked for the youth club, and I became involved with St Gall's Youth Club, and St Gall's, and met Michael through the youth club, and through my brother, when I was 16. A long time ago. 34 years ago.*


*And that was it. Been going with him and got married to him. And we went from there. He is from down the road as well. A long history. His grandmother was burnt out twice in her life. She was burnt out in Cupar Street. His mother remembers running—she hates the dark—and she remembers running when they were burning her shop. Her mother had a wee shop in Cupar Street. Pope's Row, it was called. And her mother and her were burnt out when she was seven. And his granny was then burnt out again in Bombay Street in 1969. His granny was burnt out, and his aunt on his father's side, who had a house in Bombay Street as well, was also burnt out.*

*Michael had grown up in Bombay Street, and then moved to the Springfield Road, and then moved to St James.*

*When would his granny have lost her shop?*

*In the 20's. She was married to a soldier. And he was killed in the First World War. She had seven children and they all died of pneumonia or rheumatic fever at a very early age, except Mrs Culbert. And then she remarried a man who had been a soldier in the First World War as well, and then he died. So, a tragic life. And she worked in the mills. She lived to 106. She only died last year. And worked hard all her life.*





Case Study Three

# The View from the Hill



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# The View from the Hill:

a project of the Arts for Older People Network

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Contact:

**Maureen Harkins**

Chairperson of the Arts for Older People Network

[www.caf.ie/AOP.asp](http://www.caf.ie/AOP.asp)

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*The project acknowledged the wisdom and value of older people and their skills. It gave participants a sense of empowerment to be able to effect change at governmental/statutory level.*

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## **Project Description:**

The View from the Hill is a project aimed to raise awareness on behalf of older people. It has a text-based policy research component and theatre/drama production action research component, which involves and addresses older people and their carers, to promote arts by, with and for older people. The project has been managed by the Arts for Older People Network (AOPN), (Chair, Maureen Harkins, led and delivered by Gerri Moriarty).

The Theatre Play 'The Bench' is an action research-based project which took the shape of a piece of community theatre, devised and written with the help of people over the age of 75 and their carers, living in an urban area (Ballysillan) and in a rural area (Ballycastle).

The publication research strand, 'The View from the Hill' explores good practice in the arts for, with and by older people in NI, RoI, UK and USA. The two strands came together at a seminar for older people, carers, artists, arts organisations, stake holders and decision-makers at which the draft research was presented and the theatre piece performed.

## **What initiated the Project?**

In 1999 a study by a volunteer for Community Arts Forum carried out small-scale research into the provision of structured arts for older people in South and East Belfast. The result of the research findings confirmed that whilst there was provision, this was ad hoc and uncoordinated. Following this Maureen Harkins CAF development officer with GEBCAN (the former Greater East Belfast Community Arts Network) applied for Funding with Nationwide

and Lloyds TSB, to host a seminar to bring together stakeholders, artists and older people. Successful funding allowed for the hosting of a seminar on Arts and Older People in 2001, held at Holiday Inn Belfast in April 2001. The seminar helped to identify individuals and organisations throughout Northern Ireland interested in working together, leading to the formation of the Arts for Older People Network. Key areas for further research and key stakeholders for research and consultation became identified in the main aims and objectives of the Network seminar; out of this grew the research project *'The Bench' & 'The View from the Hill'*.

### Objectives:

To develop feasible and coherent arts provision for older people, to develop and research context and policy information in and beyond Northern Ireland, to find out more about the cultural needs of older people and to further inform funders and policy makers

Wider objectives as embraced by the Arts for Older People Network:

- To be a channel for older people and those working with older people to access a variety of information pertaining to older people in the community
- To provide opportunities for networking
- To provide the work of older people in the arts to be evaluated and documented
- To locate help and advice regarding grants, funding and sponsorship for older people's work in the arts
- To offer a platform for lobbying and profile change
- To support through education and training for older people and those working with them

### Outcomes:

1. An Original piece of theatre: *'The Bench'* which has toured to older people centres and groups across Northern Ireland.
2. A Research study  
Moriarty and Morrow (2006) *'The View from The Hill, A Study in Current Practice in Arts by, with and for Older People for the Arts for Older People Network Northern Ireland'*.
3. Evaluation report for overall project by Gerri Moriarty (2007), disseminated to Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) and other government departments key stakeholders
4. A database of organisations and individuals working in organisations relevant to older people's cultural and other needs/aspirations has additionally been set up (information held at Community Arts Forum).

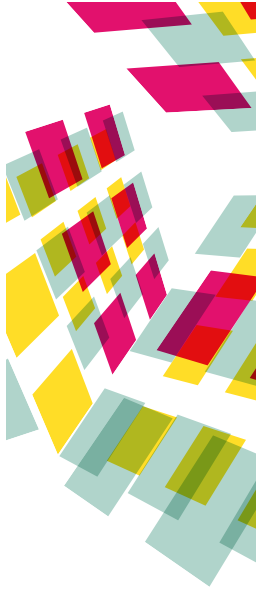
### Intangible outcomes:

Project action research encouraged performance skill development and confidence building; it created a space in which older people could be heard.

Action research also encouraged residents of housing for elderly to communicate and interact more with each other. Since the theatre play had been performed, resources and facilities provided by Clanmil have become more accessible and used.

The experience of contributing to drama through research and acting was perceived as stimulating and enjoyable. A member of a Senior Citizen's group with no previous experience of theatre





commented: *'I feel it's given me more confidence and I also feel I blend in. I've enjoyed the crack. My friends think it's brilliant that I'm a star.'* (Source: Moriarty (2007) Evaluation Document).

The project acknowledged the wisdom and value of older people and their skills. It gave participants a sense of empowerment, to be able to effect change at governmental/statutory level.

### **Project Partners:**

Founder member and chair person (since 2003) of AOPN is Maureen Harkins, who has managed the research project and has co-ordinated, as an unpaid volunteer, the overall work of the network initiative from 2001-2008. The research project was delivered by Gerri Moriarty (Research Director), with Donna Morrow (Assistant Researcher). Richard Gregory (Theatre Director) acted as a mentor to Gerri Moriarty in writing the script. Community Arts Forum supported the project administratively.

### **Funding:**

Awards for All (Lottery Art Programme) funded a series of seminars across Northern Ireland over a two year period (2005-2007) with a total amount £14,000 overall. This funded *'Over the Hill? Well, look at the View!'* as a project of seminars, workshops, exhibitions, film screenings and reminiscences.

For the research project, publication and study *'A View from the Hill'* and the theatre play *'The Bench'* funding was received from the Arts Council Northern Ireland (£20,500, with partnership funding of Belfast City Council (£3000), and of Clanmil Housing (£1000) during January – December 2006.

The project benefited greatly from the immense support of staff and residents from Harmony Court and Glenshesk Court.

Rehearsal workshop space was provided by Community Arts Forum.

Overall project: all funding was project based, no posts were paid through it, and there was no paid permanent or temporary staff.

**Location:** Seminar locations and various theatre performances in Belfast, and across Northern Ireland

### **Timescale:**

Research Project *'The View from the Hill'* from 2006 until end of 2007. The Theatre production *'The Bench'* continues to tour to older people's groups.

### **Participants and Process:**

*'The Bench'* drama production involved on average 36 people for background research. People drawn from Harmony Court, Ballysillan; Glenshesk Court, Ballycastle; and Rathmoyle Centre, Ballycastle were involved in creating this theatre piece. Most of the participants were over the age of 70. Researcher Gerri Moriarty initially worked with the older people in ones and twos, using a common set of interview questions. After this Gerri wrote the first draft of the play; this was discussed with residents as to whether it reflected their thoughts and ideas for further editing purposes. The performance involved community actors and some residents. The play created characters informed through research, but names and identities were changed.

**Evaluation:**

Evaluation included:

A questionnaire for participants, both quantitative and qualitative information was collected.

Qualitative feedback from Interim Seminar  
Belfast at Holiday Inn/ Express (2006)

*"Quite startling but not surprising information about the benefits of being involved in the arts on health. People are becoming more aware of keeping an active mind to ward off senility"*

Gerry Moriarty produced a final written evaluation for the Network: [www.caf.ie/AOP.asp](http://www.caf.ie/AOP.asp).

**Sustainability:**

The research document has become published and disseminated to policy-makers, arts practitioners, the elderly and carers; the interim research findings were formally launched in 2006 when *'The Bench'* was first performed; and the final report *'The View from the Hill'* has been disseminated to policy makers and funders.

A presentation was made (Nov 07) to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister by an AOPN Committee delegation, highlighting the findings of the report and bringing the work, aims and objectives of the Network to the attention of the Assembly. It is hoped this will begin to affect policy.

The research findings were presented at Clanmil's annual staff conference and discussions are underway with Help the Aged and Age Concern for future collaboration and funding.

*'The Bench'* was initially performed at Harmony Court and to Rathmoyle Centre, Ballycastle, and then across Northern Ireland and at an Arts and Health conference. On request of OFM/DM at the Waterfront Hall, as part of United Nations Day for Older People in Oct 2007.














Case Study Four

# The Playtrail



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# The Playtrail:

a project by Liberty Consortium

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Contact:

**Mark Roberts**

Project Manager, Liberty Consortium,  
Derry Londonderry  
[www.playtrail.com](http://www.playtrail.com)

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*The play/leisure facilities  
feature a multi-dimensional  
approach with a vision to  
link play with educational  
development and achievement.*

---

## **Project Description:**

To date, this project has resulted in playground facilities for disabled children with additional nature trail and indoor activity rooms on specialist education school grounds. The play/leisure facilities feature a multi-dimensional approach with a vision to link play with educational development and achievement. This resource is open to community beyond those attending neighbouring schools.

## **What initiated the Project?**

Parents approached the Principal of Foyle View School in regard to developing an outdoor play provision for children with special needs. This initiated a feasibility study in October 2002 (£3000 funding from Creating Common Ground), which prompted the start of the overall project initiative. A consortium of local organisations, now known as the Liberty Consortium, came together to form a steering committee to work towards the following aim: *"Through community co-operation and collaboration to design, construct, develop and maintain an inclusive adventure play trail."* Subsequently Playtrail plans were developed for an area located between Foyle View School and Belmont School (both specialist education provision).

## **Objectives:**

To address special needs and requirements of disabled children by

- creating an outdoor and indoor activity/visitor centre
- encouraging play, adventure, physical expression
- motivating and holistically stimulating learning ability through physical engagement

- creating an inclusive environment for children to mix with local community
- setting new standards for children’s activity, play and outdoor facilities
- creating environments and engaging young people in activities which are less competitive
- developing skills and employability prospects
- easing transition from institution to work environment

### **Outcomes:**

So far the Project has resulted in:

- A Junior Play area,
- Adventure area (7-12 year olds),
- Sensory Garden,
- Nature trail,
- Visitor Centre with indoor activity area (art & craft room),
- Outdoor auditorium (seats up to 250 children)

Currently under development are:

- An Orienteering and trim trail,
- Sports area,
- Horticultural area (allotments, vegetable/ kitchen area with educational link to school dinner provision)

### **Intangible outcomes:**

- The concept of inclusiveness is instilled in all aspects of The Playtrail and its projects.
- Cross-generational dialogue and activity is further developed as parents accompany children to utilise and enjoy facilities (child protection requires guardians to be present).
- Additional dialogue, tolerance and acceptance of difference is enabled by a range of mixed ability children playing in same grounds, from specialist education

to main stream education ability. (80% of visitors bring children along from mainstream schooling.)

- The benefits of non-competitive play to learning are important and frequently overlooked in mainstream education and leisure facilities. Play provision creates opportunities for advancing knowledge about how play promotes achievement, ability, creativity and personal development.
- Development of opportunities for younger, disadvantaged people through creative involvement and engagement, enabling young people to experience a sense of adventure and risk taking.

### **Project Partners:**

The Playtrail is a partnership project with the Western Education & Library Board (WELB) who has leased the lands to Liberty Consortium for a period of 25 years.

### **Funding:**

To date the project has been funded to the total of £934,004. Of which over 45% comes directly and indirectly from Big Lottery Funding. The remaining funding is drawn from Western Education and Library Board, Dept of Social Development, Peace 2 Funding, Children in Need, Derry City Council, Foyle Health and Social Services, and over 10 other funding initiatives, charities and foundations.

The nature of the funding landscape is complex and in constant flux, as a result research, application and related administrative processes take up to 50% of the project manager’s time. Long term funding allows for sustainability of project and is preferential, however the





process is more rigorous with long term funding impacting on time management. The Project Manager has a background in fundraising and assessing funding applications. This experience of the funding process from the point of view of both assessor and applicant has proven invaluable to his role at Playtrail.

A Donation Scheme has been put in place to encourage Playtrail users to make a contribution to running costs.

**Location:**

The Playtrail is located within the Greater Shantallow area of Derry, on the Racecourse Road. It is within the grounds of Belmont House and Foyle View Schools adjacent to the entrance to St Patrick's Primary, Pennyburn.

**Timescale:**

This project initiative started 2002 and is still ongoing.

**Participants and Process:**

Mark Roberts is the full time manager for Playtrail since 2003 with additional support from a part-time post. Department of Social Development will be funding two additional posts to devise training and employment opportunities from 2008.

Mark is guided by the 11 Board members of Liberty Consortium, (including the Principals of the two neighbouring schools), Parents, Carers and other supportive organisations. There has been extensive consultation with disability groups and through school, parents and carers in regard to how to use the space and make it attractive to other users,

and to develop partners for future funding opportunities/possibilities.

The playground and leisure facilities are open to the public during school holidays and weekends. Special activities are organised for birthday parties, events etc. The open-air theatre space holds up to 250 people. Visitor numbers in July/August 2007 were approx 12,000 and over the first year of monitoring users of the facilities numbered 36,000 (Monitored through a signing in process)

**Evaluation:**

Informal evaluation from the children and adults comes in form of verbal comments, suggestions or thank you presents (cakes, donations etc – feedback in kind showing that project is valued and appreciated, and that children want to play and use the facilities provided).

An external evaluation will be funded by the Department of Social Development (£5000) in support of the Transition initiative.

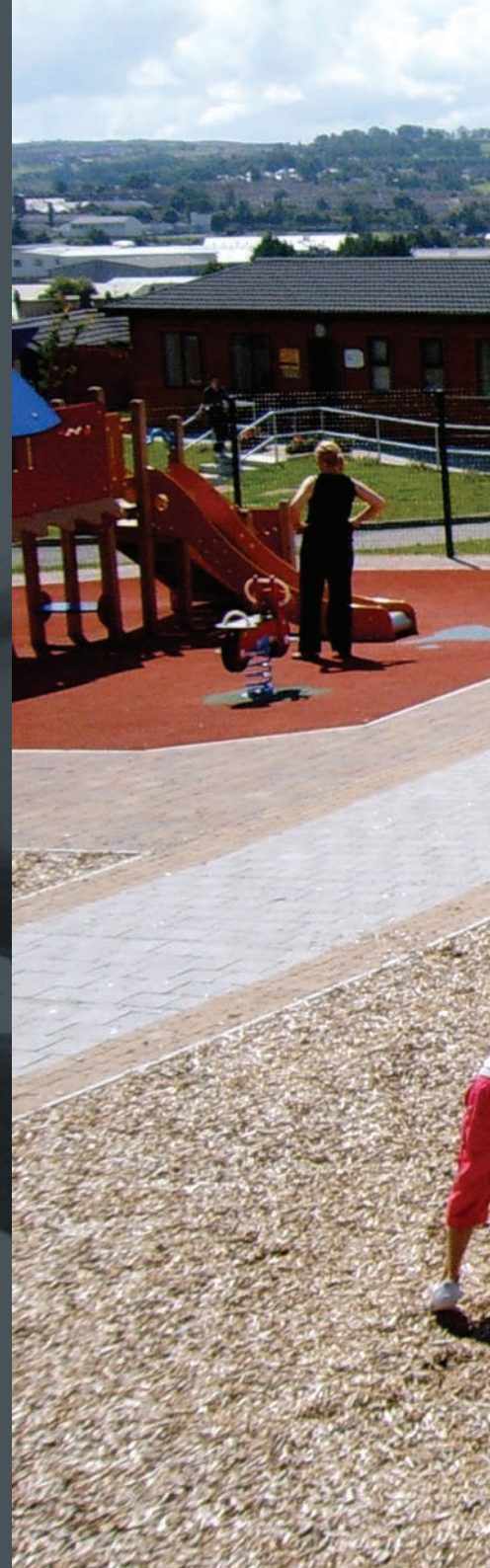
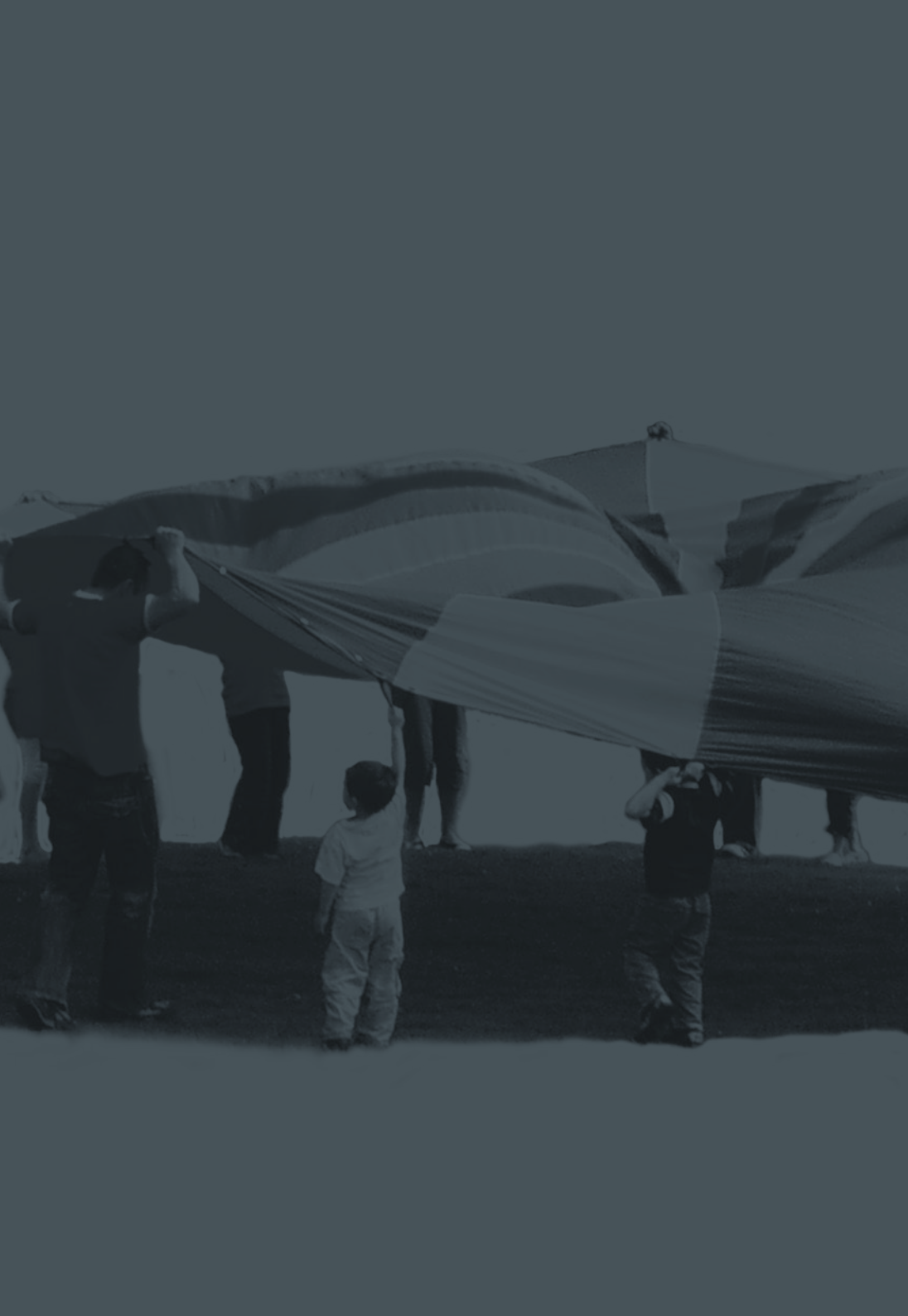
**Sustainability:**

Derry City Council is working with Liberty Consortium to develop better playground models for across the City. The Playtrail acts as a model of good practice, and also feeds into the play strategy with Derry Children's Commission and Northern Ireland Play Strategy (launched 2007).

The Playtrail is aiming to sustain its development through the Transition project, a two-year pilot project which will develop a person-centred approach to training school leavers with learning disabilities in site maintenance, horticulture skills, etc. From April 2008 two full time workers will be involved in setting up the training facilities for September 2008.


















Case Study Five

# Building Bridges



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# Building Bridges:

a project by Dance United Northern Ireland (DUNI)

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Contact:

**Mags Byrne**

Artistic Director

[www.danceunitedni.com](http://www.danceunitedni.com)

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*...the enabling of participants to become facilitators in later [dance] workshops demonstrated that the programme led to growing self-confidence and a range of skills among participants ...*

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## **Project Description:**

Between 2003 and 2006, Dance United NI designed and delivered Building Bridges - a dance development project working with and between young people excluded from the mainstream due to their special needs and/or behavioural difficulties.

The programme sought through contemporary dance to engage and build connections with young people - with dance underpinning the developmental and transformational process. Through a tailored process of engagement and intensive contemporary dance workshops, the young adults reached new heights of focus, discipline and motivation and challenged attitudes to people with a disability. Participants discovered their own unknown talents and capabilities and the project concluded in performances of extraordinary standards in both community and professional venues, which surpassed both participants' and audiences' expectations.

## **What initiated the Project?**

Choreographer and dance teacher Mags Byrne is a founder member of the London based company Dance United (2000) with international choreographer Royston Maldoom (<http://www.royston-maldoom.net/start/>) and film producer, Andrew Coggins. Their pioneering work with street and working children in Ethiopia led to the establishment of the internationally renowned Adugna - Ethiopia's biggest contemporary dance company and globally acclaimed training and capacity building arts project. This experience - of using dance as a tool for development - led them to transfer and share their learning and years of experience with children and young people across Northern Ireland.

## Objectives:

The aim of this programme was to engender a change in attitude towards people with special learning needs and to facilitate a process of integration into the community -using dance in educational settings.

In order to achieve this aim, Dance United NI set these objectives:

- To develop access to dance as an art form and an activity that is physical, cognitive and social;
- To bring together groups of people with different levels of learning ability and to encourage a process of mutual understanding and integration;
- To raise awareness of the potential of people with disabilities to be active members of their communities, by challenging their own expectations as well as those of the public;
- To provide opportunities for teachers, guardians and families to discover the hitherto unknown talents and capabilities of the people under their care;
- To offer training in the area of dance to young people who may wish to assist in dance workshops and to enable them to become positive role models;
- To promote dance within the education system, as an effective tool to develop the learning capacity of young people with special learning needs.

## Outcomes:

- **Contemporary dance theatre performances** in community venues and professional theatres across Northern Ireland.
- **A new specialist PE/Dance teaching post** at one of the participating schools.
- **Project rolled out** across three Educational Boards in NI following successful pilot
- **Debriefing workshops** – allowing participants to evaluate their achievement, and crucially to provide support in the psychologically low period following the intensity of performance.
- **Training workshops for school facilitators**, enabling them to deliver similar projects on completion of the workshop programme.
- **Co-sharing skills** amongst participants, and for partner schools.
- **Development of post** - workshop support for young people on completion of project.
- **Informal life mentoring** - three young people completed a year-long apprenticeship programme with Dance United NI. They are now in stable, social situations including employment and/or formal education.
- **Documentation** - series of external evaluations, video, and DVD's.



**Intangible outcomes:**

- Development of participants self-esteem and self value;
- Development of physical awareness and movement skills including the disciplines of concentration and focus;
- Enhancement of social and communication skills;
- Development of interpersonal skills and group dynamics;
- Positive impact on general physical health and their understanding and responsibility for such;
- Increased awareness and acceptance of diversity.

**Project Partners:**

**Pilot Project:** North Eastern Education and Library Board, Rosstulla Special School<sup>9</sup>, EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) New Mossley and Greenisland.

**Year 1:** North Eastern Education and Library Board, Rosstulla Special School and Newtownabbey Education Guidance Centre.

**Year 2:** Belfast Education and Library Board, Cedar Lodge Special School, Belfast; Loughshore Educational Resources Centre, Belfast; and Newtonabbey Educational Guidance Centre.

**Year 3:** South Eastern Education and Library Board, Tor Bank Special School<sup>10</sup>, Dundonald, EOTAS Bangor<sup>11</sup>, and young people from the above centres.

**Funding:**

Dance United NI was not core funded at the time:

- Pilot project was funded by BBC Children in Need (30,000)
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (£96,000) supported the three-year programme.
- Additional funding by the National lottery through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (£10,000 per year for year 2 & 3).

**Location:**

- Rosstulla Special School, Newtownabbey
- Cedar Lodge Special School, Belfast
- Loughshore Educational Resources Centre, Belfast
- Newtownabbey Education Guidance Centre, Newtownabbey
- Tor Bank Special School, Dundonald
- EOTAS New Mossley and Greenisland, Bangor.
- Waterfront Hall, Belfast
- Courtyard Theatre, Newtownabbey
- Stranmillis College Theatre

**Timescale:**

2003–2006

**Participants and Process:**

- Young people with behavioural problems and/or learning difficulties worked with professional dance artists supported and guided by teachers/facilitators working at the specialist schools/centres.
- A pilot programme followed by a 3yr year programme of workshops in different schools with approximately 20–25 participants per programme. There were different groups in each year.
- Participants from previous workshop strands

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<sup>9</sup> Rosstulla is a special school catering for the needs of children between the ages of 4 – 18 years who have moderate learning difficulties. This school is split into primary and secondary departments.

<sup>10</sup> Tor Banks caters for young people with severe learning difficulties.

<sup>11</sup> EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) caters for young people in the final year of their education who for a variety of reasons are excluded from mainstream education.

identified themselves to take on an assistant facilitator role in the next workshop strand.

- Initially the two groups were facilitated separately.
- A series of trust and confidence building workshops.
- Second phase began when safe environments had become established.
- Second phase, groups came together and team skills were fostered to develop the joint performance.
- The workshops led to performances in front of peers, family and eventually external audiences.

#### **Artist facilitators:**

Royston Maldoom, Dance United NI;  
Nicola Curry, Maiden Voyage Dance Company;  
Jenny Elliott, Artist in Residence, Arts Care;  
Dylan Quinn, Art 4 Change (NI) Ltd.

#### **Evaluation:**

Maureen Mackin an Independent Arts Consultant carried out the evaluation on behalf of DUNI. The evaluation incorporated feedback through interviews, discussions and questionnaires with participants including teachers, partner organisations, dance artists, project manager and audience members. It included an assessment of the aims and objectives of the project; the quality of experience for participants and facilitators; project management, expectations, strengths and weaknesses and made recommendations. The findings were disseminated to share learning and to contribute to the development of good practice, which included informal feedback to participants.

#### **Sustainability:**

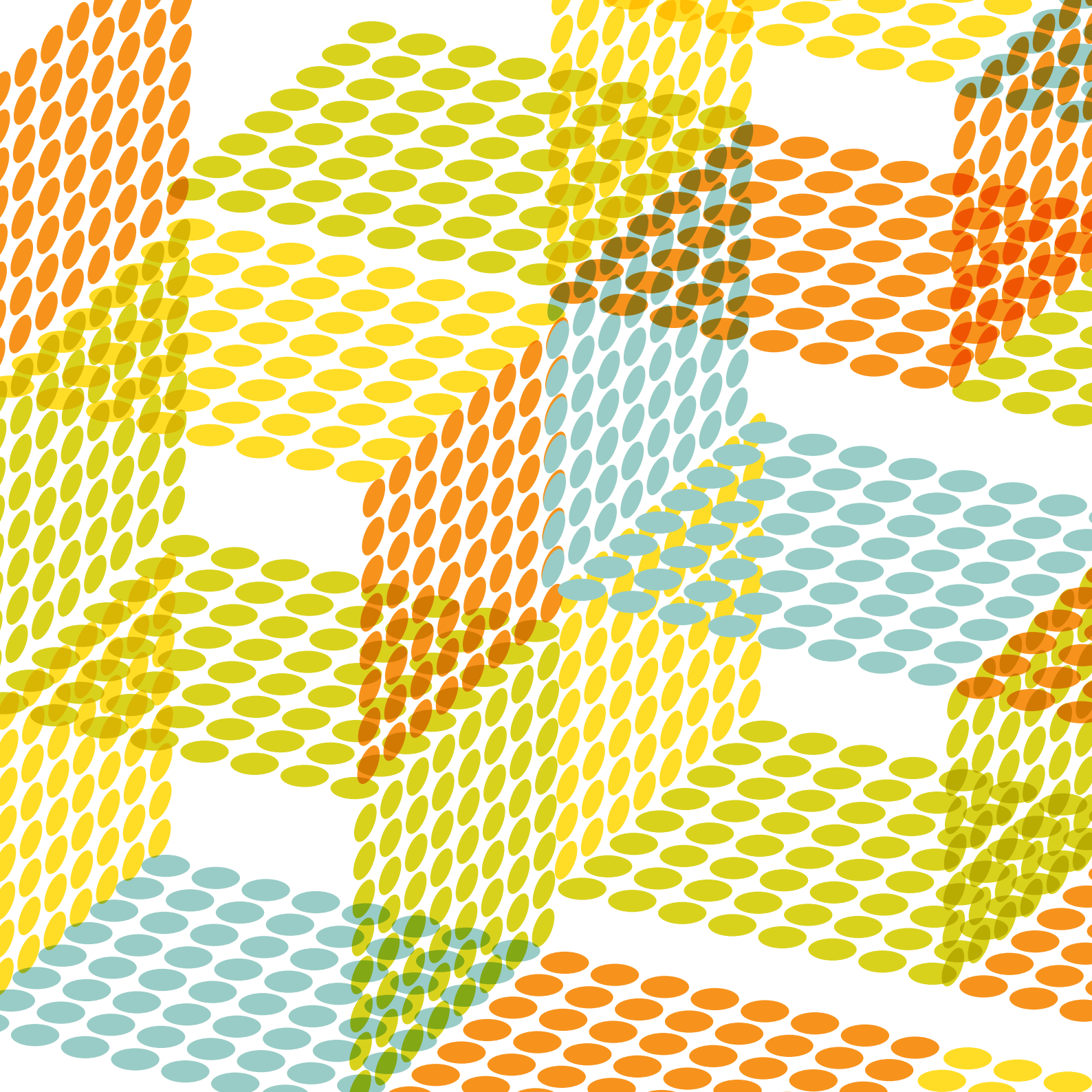
The follow on training provided by DUNI to the teaching staff was an important and interesting element in ensuring sustainability of work, as was the active recruitment of a PE teacher with a dance specialism in one of the schools. This was recognition of the positive impact of the Building Bridges programme and importantly created long-term provision in a specialist-learning environment. In addition, the programme enabled participants to become facilitators in later workshops, some of who, with continued informal support from Dance United NI went on to have stable social and economic situations.















Case Study Six

# The Smile Mile

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# The Smile Mile:

a project by the Prison Arts Foundation

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Contact:

**Ciara O'Malley**

Prison Arts Foundation Artist in Residence  
at Maghaberry Prison

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*Working in a prison is  
unlike any other environment,  
and the artist has to  
develop an understanding  
and acceptance of their role  
in such an environment.*

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## **Project Description:**

Based on a one-year artist residency scheme at HMP Maghaberry, facilitated by the Prison Arts Foundation Northern Ireland, 'The Smile Mile' was a short-term project within this scheme that developed from a consultation with prisoners and staff, which identified areas and environments in need of improvement through creative interventions.

This was the first major site-specific project in the prison. Creativity in a restricted environment such as a prison gives prisoners a voice on what the piece will be, how it will be made, how it can be developed, completed, viewed and sited etc. and thus aims to promote a sense of achievement and ownership in the participants.

## **What initiated the Project?**

Prison Management under the initiative of then Deputy Governor wanted to affect lasting changes to the prison institution to support a shift of emphasis towards the social rehabilitation of prisoners. In order to achieve this, it was thought that the mindset and behaviour of all constituencies in the prison had to change. Art initiatives were considered an effective way to bring out and communicate the individual in both prisoners and staff. The artist's role was defined through the residency scheme in terms of developing and co-ordinating art projects that would enhance the environment of the prison, in turn increasing the self-worth of prisoners and staff, and generating a sense of ownership of the environment. The 'Smile Mile' was one step in that process.

**Objectives:**

- To create an installation piece for 'Wembley Tunnel' (the main arterial corridor from the body of the prison to the hospital and the visiting area) that would improve and enhance the physical environment.
- To introduce wit and humour, which is part of Northern Irish life, through visual works and extend this to other nationalities that are part of the prison community
- To liven up atmosphere in order to affect a positive change to the overall appearance of the institution
- To open up attitudes in a restrictive and highly managed environment
- To enhance self-worth of prisoners and staff and partially empower them to engage actively with the institution and to represent their own interest
- To promote a (temporary) sense of community amongst the project participants

**Outcomes:**

The project led to a 119 foot long multiple-part installation, for Wembley Tunnel intended to be a work in transition: i.e. to be changed or added to over time. The transformation of Wembley Tunnel included the changing of the colour of the walls and the installation of new flooring. Change of lighting was addressed too but was not implemented due to security issues. Wembley Tunnel now also functions as a showcase for visitors such as schools, statutory bodies and NGO's to the prison.

**Intangible outcomes:**

Prisoners' skills in creating installations were developed as a way to enhance the expressivity and effectiveness of the work.

The project aimed to open up prisoner's views of art beyond the favoured prison genre of the (self-) 'portrait'.

Taking on the residency, the artist had to think a lot about the needs and possibilities of a challenging and, by necessity, a tightly-controlled institutional environment, finding ways to realise the project within the constraints of time and security issues. This required developing a sense of self-preservation.

**Project Partners:**

- Lead artist / facilitator: Ciara O'Malley
- Prisoners
- Specialist input by artist/print maker Lucy Turner

**Funding:**

Prison Arts Foundation project received 1 years funding from Arts Council of Northern Ireland. It was also supported by Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Probation Board.

Funding (approx. £3,000 – £4,000) covered artists' time (4 hrs a week) and materials. The artist residency scheme also involved working on other projects as well as the 'Smile Mile' (e.g. hospital project, family project, setting up the gallery space. etc.), as well as motivating and facilitating prisoners to create work beyond the allocated project hours.





### **Location:**

HMP Maghaberry – Category A,  
i.e. Maximum Security, Prison, Northern Ireland

### **Timescale:**

June – October 2006

### **Participants and Process:**

Group of ten prisoners participated through weekly workshops in the Prison's Education Department, and contributions from 15-20 other prisoners throughout the prison. Due to the very tight time allocation for the project and security restrictions on prisoners' movements in the prison, for instance escorting them to the Education Department for the workshops, many of the prisoners who contributed to the project created or continued work in their cells. This has obvious implications for the exchange between artist and participants as well as for the level of execution of work.

Initially, staff and prisoners did not clearly understand what role the artist had been given. Some were more receptive in learning than others, and some saw the artist as a threat. There are approximately 800 staff/prisoners and just one artist in residence. The Smile Mile project evolved as the first major project during the artist's residency in the prison.

The individual boards, onto which prisoners transferred their work, had to be cut up into manageable sizes and pre-treated for screen printing / painting. They had to be transported backwards and forwards through security including the tight revolving gates.

Contact needed to be maintained to prisoners in the houses and in the hospital who were not part of the weekly workshops in Education. There were challenges in negotiating workshop needs and prisoners' movement with prison routine and procedures.

Most of the prisoners had little experience of art beyond a general interest.

The work was developed through text pieces, prison sayings and jokes etc. combined with drawings of people and places in Northern Ireland that were important to the prisoners. Only one prisoner did a lot of art but from a narrow perspective – portraits and animation. The artist organised and facilitated the weekly workshops in the Education Department. She co-ordinated the demand for art material and organised and brought them into the prison. Together with the participants, she developed the project brief.

The artist sought to create a balance of input and views and to integrate all project participants, to bring the group together. After six to eight weeks the participants felt comfortable as a group. The prisoners developed a strong ownership of the project which became particularly manifest when one work was removed from the 'Smile Mile' by the prison management.



**Evaluation:**

No formal evaluation took place. An informal reflection of the project was carried out by the artist to assess: What worked. What did not? Why? There was an interest to implement a more formal evaluation, which could not be realised due to a lack of time/resources for such short, fixed term projects. The residency did not allow for an in-depth evaluation although working in such a complex environment there clearly needs to be some stock taking in order to develop future projects.

**Sustainability:**

A large scale sculpture project for one of the main court yards evolved from this project. To sustain such work there has to be a continued dialogue with all constituencies in the prison on what environments needs improved.

Working in a prison is unlike any other environment, and the artist has to develop an understanding and acceptance of their role in such an environment. In addition the artist's role needs to be understood and valued not just at management but also staff level.



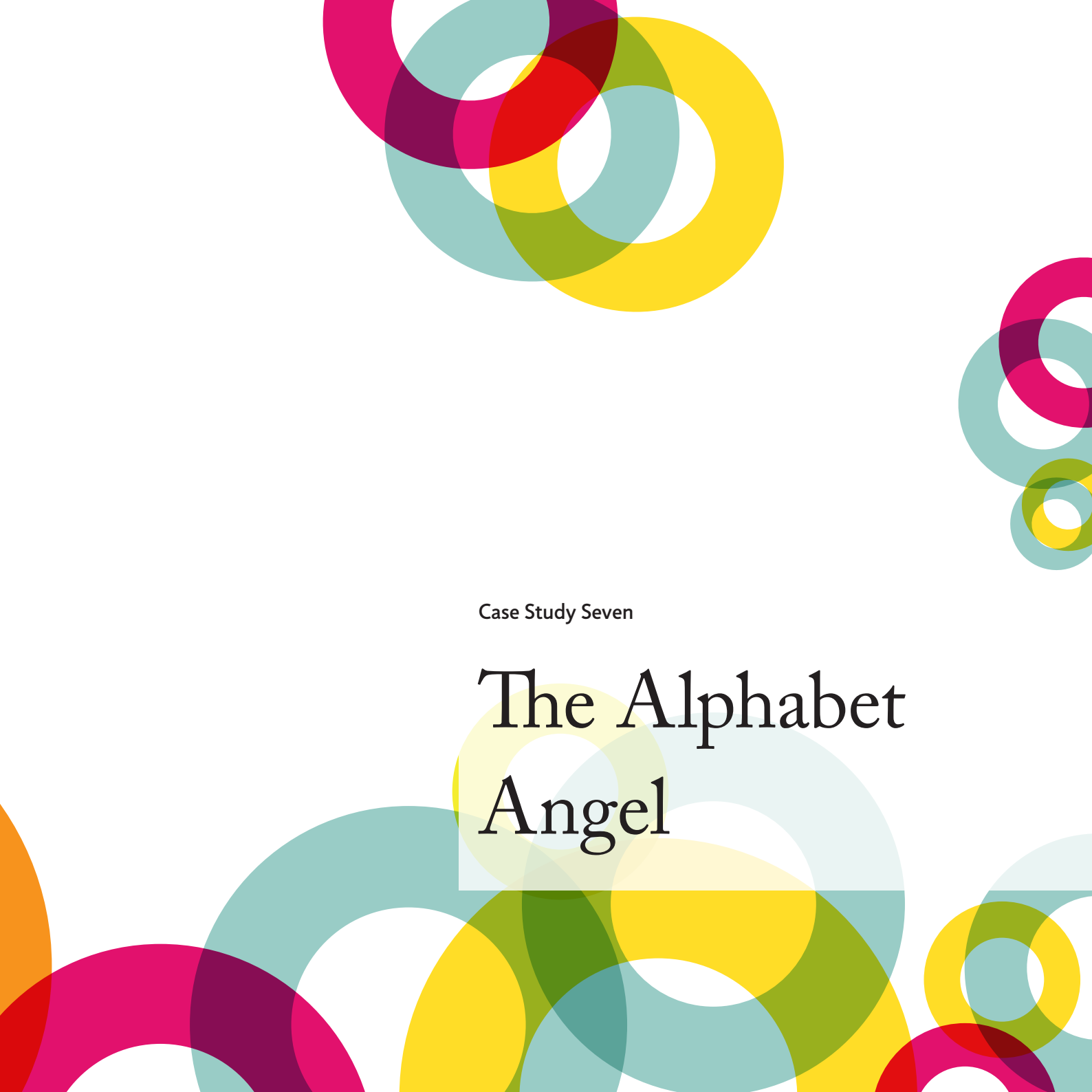












Case Study Seven

# The Alphabet Angel

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# The Alphabet Angel:

public art sculpture situated in Dundarave housing Estate, Bushmills.

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Contact:

**Peter McDonald**

Senior Landscape Architect, GroundworkNI

## **Project Description:**

This project was part of a larger 5-year project, funded through the Creating Common Ground programme (further details outlined later) in the Dundarave Housing Estate in Bushmills, Co Antrim. The Dundarave Project initially developed a strategic plan for environmental improvement with technical advice from Groundwork NI (who also acted as technical advisor to all 40 projects.) Out of this work, priorities were developed that met the funds available and the timescale, leading to the creation of the Alphabet Angel and also a play space for the community's children.

In terms of the Alphabet Angel, the community were keen to develop a sculpture that would encapsulate their Ulster Scots heritage. The artist Ross Wilson assisted by local children through a series of workshops and James Fenton, an Ulster Scots Poet/Writer/Historian, whose poetry is engraved on the stone pathway leading to the sculpture, developed the sculpture over 2 years. In addition the children were involved in workshops that led to the creation of ceramic heads. An annual Ulster Scots poetry event, suggested by the artist, has grown out of the making of the statue, and a replica of the statues head was used as the award.

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*The Alphabet Angel Sculpture  
...celebrated and paralleled  
growing interest and awareness  
of the Ulster Scots traditions  
and language of the area.*

---

## **What initiated the Project?**

The Creating Common Ground process developed an estate strategy. The group produced a yearly implementation plan prioritising elements to be undertaken from the strategy plan. Both the statue and children's play area were given high priority.

**Objectives:**

The overall objective of the Creating Common Ground consortium was *"to develop innovative responses to multiple deprivation in areas of urban and rural disadvantage throughout Northern Ireland."* In the case of Dundarave Housing Estate the objective was to develop ideas with the community about how their specific environment could be improved and carry through to fruition.

**Outcomes:**

- The Alphabet Angel Sculpture that celebrated and paralleled growing interest and awareness of the Ulster Scots traditions and language of the area.
- Ceramic Masks made by the children are kept as a memento of their involvement.
- A bronze head, replica of the head of the angel is used as first prize in Ulster Scots poetry competition. Competition involved 5 primary schools from local townlands.
- The making of postcards and Christmas cards was part of the process.
- The overall process also led the community to identify the need for a children's play area. This involved the Consortium Project Team comprising the Housing Executive, Dundarave Residents and Environmental Forum, Moyle District Council and other Statutory and Voluntary agencies. The play park was launched in September 2005.

**Intangible outcomes**

- Positive media for the Housing Estate.  
The sculpture is now a part of the official visitor attractions in the Bushmills area.
- In the view of Groundwork NI, the project gave the Community Association a sense of achievement and belief that they could achieve something.
- It contributed to the growth of the community's confidence, through action and the production of artifacts
- As part of growing belief and pride in housing estate the Northern Ireland Housing Executive responded by carrying out an external cyclical maintenance of fences/ gutters etc, greatly improving the look of estate and its general atmosphere.

**Project Partners:**

- The Creating Common Ground Consortium
- The Dundarave Community
- Groundwork NI acting as technical advisors

**Funding:**

The initiative with the Dundarave Community was funded as part of the "Creating Common Ground" *"40 Communities Programme"* (funded by the BIG LOTTERY) where 40 estates were selected across NI. The consultation began in 2003 with the establishment of a strategic partnership of 9 statutory and voluntary agencies bodies with NIHE acting as lead partner. Within this funding framework, Dundarave Community was successful in securing approx. £50,000 funds to carry out projects. Of those total funds approx £20,800 was used to develop the Alphabet Angel. This funding of £20,800 was then used to attract other additional funding from Ulster Scots Agency (£10,000), Causeway Initiative





(£3,200), Community raised funds (£1,000) and NI Housing Executive (£5,000). This is what the final evaluation report called “*a cocktail of funding*”, and whilst additional funding is positive, such ‘cocktails’ also bring with them challenges in workloads related to application processes, managing of funds, degrees in flexibility of funders and delays/ differences in timing of funds.

#### **Location:**

Dundarave Housing estate is situated at the northern end of Bushmills, a village set in the rural landscape of North Antrim. In order to fulfil the criteria for funding for the Creating Common Ground Consortium, Dundarave had to be considered an area of multiple deprivation.

#### **Timescale:**

Consultation for Project started in April 2002. The Angel was completed in November 2004. The Children’s Play Area opened in Sept 2005. Final evaluation report complete in Oct 06

#### **Participants and Process:**

**The Community** – in particular the children of Dundarave Housing Estate.

**Groundwork NI** provided the technical input to the project. They define their purpose as an organisation in Northern Ireland as “*Changing places, changing lives, changing minds.*” They are there to help the community identify not only what they want, but what they need; helping them to turn their ideas into real outcomes by understanding the process of implementation, costs and ramification of ongoing maintenance. Groundwork NI feel strongly that the process must demonstrate good practice and insist on employing people of quality.

**The Artist/ Sculptor, Ross Wilson**<sup>12</sup> is a well-respected artist and sculptor based in Northern Ireland, viewed by Groundwork as someone who can engage and listen to community and who can work flexibly. He held several workshops with 12-15 children and presented his sketches and working drawings on several occasions to local residents.

**Ulster Scots Historian and Poet, James Fenton** who was approached by the artist. James Fenton contributed text, which became incorporated into the sculpture, and he also organised the ongoing poetry competition.

Creating Common Ground held monthly daytime meetings attended by up to three community representatives. These meetings were a contact point providing information to the community and answering their queries.

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<sup>12</sup> [www.rosswilsonartist.com](http://www.rosswilsonartist.com)

<sup>13</sup> Report was published Oct 2006, available at [www.nihe.gov.uk/publications/reports/CCGfinalreport.pdf](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/publications/reports/CCGfinalreport.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> quote from the [www.northantrim.com](http://www.northantrim.com) (website accessed on 19th Feb 2008)

### Evaluation:

A fully funded evaluation was carried out by an external evaluator on behalf of the Creating Common Ground Consortium.<sup>13</sup> This involved in-depth interviews with district manager, landscape architect, field officer, community representative and survey of 50 residents. In general, across all the activities of the programme it highlighted two key challenges for these types of projects:

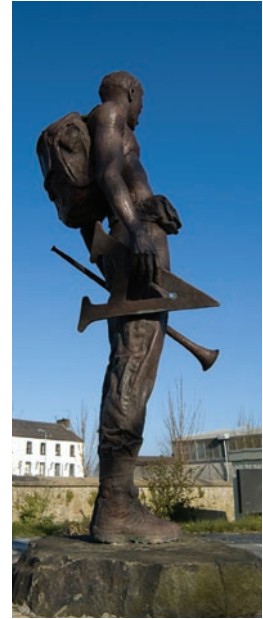
1. *"ascertaining needs versus the need to spend funds"*
2. *"working in communities and managing input for key influencers" specifically how "to listen to the views of the whole community (not just a few key influencers)"...*

The evaluation highlighted both the strengths and the challenges of the work carried out in Dundarave, and provided good insight into how similar future projects could be managed.

### Sustainability:

Following such an extensive evaluation it is disappointing that no substantial follow-on projects developed. Groundwork NI has a strong belief in sustainability of projects, though recognise that additional funding would be required to allow a field worker to remain after project completion in support of community capacity building.

The Ulster Scots poetry competition that evolved out of the Dundarave project is one example of how longevity can be achieved. Groundwork NI in other projects (e.g. St Luke statue at Twinbrook) understands the potency of linking environmental improvements to community ritual (in case of St Luke's statue, it has become a ritual to touch the saint's statue's hands for good fortune and healing). Significantly the Alphabet Angel is considered to *"the first physical marker to the Ulster Scots Tongue in Europe"*<sup>14</sup> and the point when the local community began to explore and take ownership over their Ulster Scots identity, leading to the creation of a cultural programme.



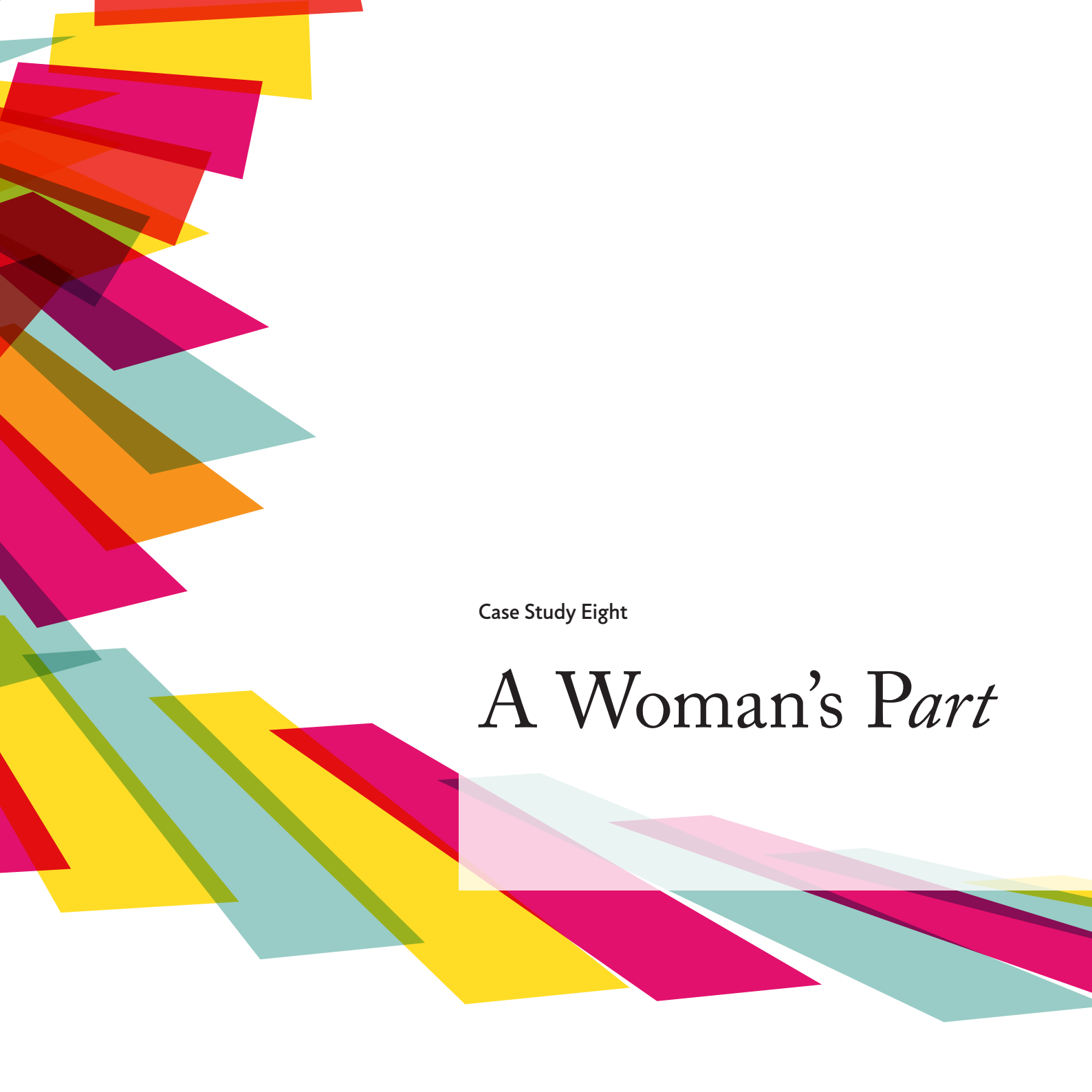












Case Study Eight

# *A Woman's Part*

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# A Woman's Part:

a project by Community Arts Forum

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Contact:

**Heather Floyd**

Director of Community Arts Forum.

[www.caf.ie](http://www.caf.ie)

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*... [a] Woman's Part was designed and developed using creative writing and drama and focusing on women's role as activists in the conflict.*

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## **Project Description:**

A Woman's Part was a participant-led, experiential, creative writing and drama programme delivered by the Community Arts Forum (CAF) between February and June 2007. It involved a group of women who had played various activist roles in the Northern Irish conflict.

It formed part of an overall programme entitled Active Citizenship funded by the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland through its Peace 2 programme. This was a three-stranded programme consisting of:

- ARTiculate: a series of 20 hour arts workshops exploring the legacy of the conflict
- Seminar programme: a series of seminars across the region aimed at exploring how the arts are used in societies emerging from conflict and creating a space for community activists to engage with policy makers
- A Woman's Part

The Active Citizenship programme dovetailed with a seminar and conference programme which CAF was delivering, whose high points included a conference in October 2005: Arts – Towards An Inclusive Society and a follow-on conference in November 2006: Cultures and Conflicts.

A Woman's Part was a 14-week programme of one day a week training that involved developing the participant's writing and drama skills to find creative ways of communicating about their experiences and reflection on the past to each other and future audiences. The workshop culminated in a drama performance and

publication of creative writing, which was documented by Community TV (NvTv). The performance has been delivered to both internal and invited audiences and in public contexts. In addition NvTv has developed a television programme about a Woman's Part.

### **What initiated the Project?**

Prior to this project Maureen Harkins, CAF development officer and local drama facilitator Jo Egan initiated and developed a creative writing and drama programme called Women and Citizenship with a group of women in east Belfast. Egan and Harkins proposed that CAF consider taking this programme to another level and including it as part of an application for Peace 2 European funding.

From this initial proposal, A Woman's Part was designed and developed using creative writing and drama and focusing on women's role as activists in the conflict.

### **Objectives:**

Finding creative avenues to open up dialogue about women's active role during the period of civil conflict in Northern Ireland:

- To explore the role of women as active participants, encouraging exploration of the holistic role which women played in the local conflict.
- Inviting participants to reflect and retell their stories to a group of women from different community backgrounds.

In the words of the co-ordinators of A Woman's Part the project aimed to:

- Make the complexity of women's engagement with the conflict more visible
- Explore the role of women in local and international conflicts.
- Give women a space to explore their role as activists during the recent conflict through writing and drama
- Promote community arts as a tool to address conflict

### **Outcomes:**

Publication of participant's stories and poems. Drama Production and performances to invited and external audiences:

- Performances at conference "*Is Gender part of Good Relations?*", Grosvenor House, Belfast 2007;
- Work in progress presentation at Interface, School of Art and Design, Belfast, University of Ulster (May 2007);
- Full performance at Linenhall Library, Belfast (invited audience and launch of publication Sept 2007)
- NvTv Community TV screening of Panel discussion and performance (Nov 2007)
- Performance at CAF AGM (Dec 2007), Case study material on CAF website is being developed.



### Intangible Outcomes:

- Validating of women's diverse experiences
- Creating space to articulate stories and memories to each other and to women from different social and community backgrounds
- Allowing participants to work through own role through creative writing and drama
- Creating and developing new audiences for this work and its outcomes across other communities, including the academic sector
- Finding out about each other, gathering respect, developing dialogue and contacts, networking
- Drawing on cathartic aspect of drama to perform stories and memories.
- Building confidence and advance skills acquisition: learning creative writing and drama/ performance skills, as well as negotiation and listening skills within group experience
- Developing skills and confidence further for some participants to participate in local community theatre and creative writing initiatives, and to engage in further training via Ransom Productions creative writing training workshops
- Defusing the context and explosiveness of content and subject matter of material developed through creative process
- Contributing to peace building and a level of understanding that was not there before.



### Project Partners:

Project led by Community Arts Forum, Belfast: the umbrella body for community arts in Northern Ireland.

Development Officers CAF:

**Maureen Harkins/ Niamh Flanagan.**

Director CAF: **Heather Floyd.**

Information Officer: **Chris Ball**

Information Assistant: **Caragh O'Donnell.**

Evaluator of project: **Brid Ruddy.**

Context support and evaluation:

**Claire Hackett,** Storytelling

– Subgroup, *Healing Through Remembering.*

Consultant: **E J Havlin**

Academic Researcher:

**Doris Rohr/Interface University of Ulster**

**NVTV Community Television,**

Donegall Street, Belfast.

### Funding:

Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, Peace 2 Measure 2.7

Circa £50,000 pa for 2.5 years total for overall project (three strands).

£125,000 in total for ARTiculate, Seminar series and *Woman's Part*; Development worker, facilitators and project included in this.

### Location:

Community Arts Forum Belfast, Linenhall Library; residential stay at An Creagan, Omagh, County Tyrone.



**Timescale:**

Project idea germinated in Jan 2005 (thinking through phase Jan 2005-Jan 2006), Application for funding in June 2005, funding allocated in Jan 2006; actual project period for a Woman's Part, Feb– Sept 2007

**Participants and Process:**

Woman participants were recruited from diverse communities, with different political, religious and social backgrounds from dominant traditions within Northern Ireland. Criteria for selection were based on women that had been active citizens during the period of the conflict. 15 women were recruited and 11 contributed to the final publication.

Four women were peer-selected to represent on Steering Group. The Steering group involved Artist Facilitators, Project Development Officer and Director of CAF, Evaluator and Academic Researcher.

Artist Facilitators:

Drama: **Orla McKeagney**

Creative Writing: **Ruth Carr**

Participant-led model was monitored through Steering Group mechanism. This proved to be a complex model as it increased the level of the participant's responsibility for success of project.

**Evaluation:**

Through participants themselves, through verbal and written feedback.

Formal evaluation and feedback carried out by professional consultants and evaluators both throughout and on completion of process. E J Havlin Consultant, Martin Snodden (Conflict Consultation and Management) and Bríd Ruddy (professional evaluator).

Evaluative feedback seminar organised by Doris Rohr, Interface, School of Art and Design, University of Ulster, allowing work in progress to be reviewed by an external audience. Researcher also part of CAF's formal project evaluation report.

**Sustainability:**

The nature of the funding meant that this was a time-limited project. However CAF continues to promote the outcomes of the project through its website and publications.

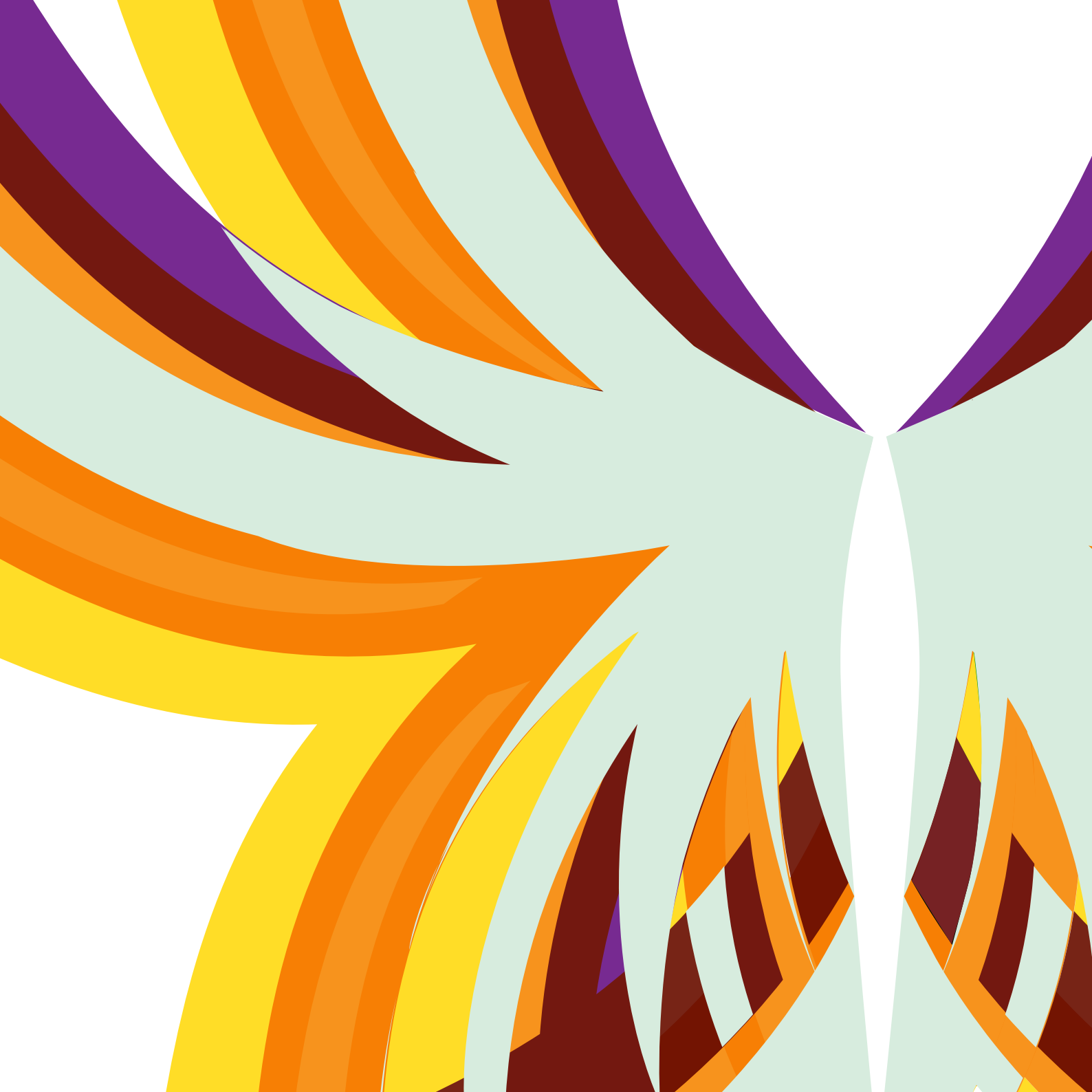
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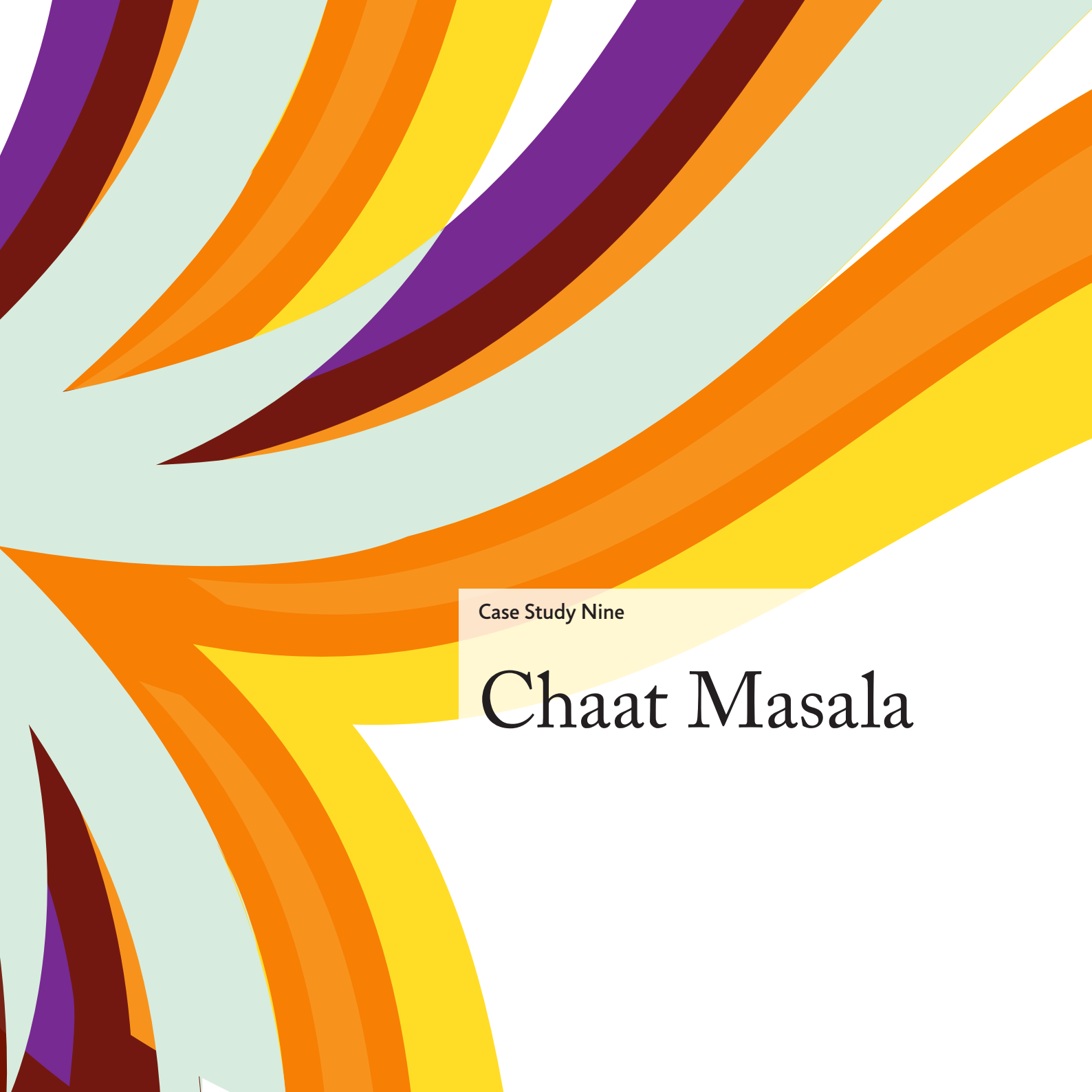
*I was worried that I may be taking part in a project with participants that may be negative, judgemental towards my beliefs and my upbringing. However, I trusted CAF and decided to go ahead, I found the course at times to be emotionally draining but also very rewarding, We each listened to each other and respected each other. At no time was I uncomfortable in the group.*

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Case Study Nine

# Chaata Masala

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# Chaat Masala:

a project by Tinderbox and others

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Contact:

**John McCann**

Outreach Director for  
Tinderbox Theatre Company,  
72 High Street, Belfast

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*The project aimed to make  
Indian culture more accessible  
to Northern Irish school  
children and also to wider  
audiences.*

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## **Project Description:**

A theatre outreach project that developed workshops, which lead to a staged outreach production of Chaat Masala. The project facilitated exchange between diverse cultural backgrounds.

## **What initiated the Project?**

In 2005 a chance meeting between John McCann (Tinderbox) and Nisha Tandon (then Arts Development Officer at the Indian Community Centre, Belfast) became the starting point of a new creative partnership. Nisha was looking for a project partner to promote cultural awareness through drama and specifically to explore the experience of a young Asian person who had relocated from India to live in Northern Ireland. The project was run over 2 stages spanning 18 months. Funding was sought from Belfast City Council in Feb/March 2004 and granted two months later.

## **Objectives:**

In terms of its Outreach activities, Tinderbox “aims to ensure that people all across Northern Ireland can participate in Tinderbox activity through a range of creative programmes and learning opportunities with theatre at the heart. The vast majority of outreach work takes place in community centres, schools and church halls, generally wherever each group is based.”<sup>15</sup>

The Chaat Masala project aimed to:

- bring new people into the Indian Community Centre
- engage with young people and schools across Belfast
- increase awareness of the Indian community in Belfast and beyond



- create a piece of theatre that reflected experiences of contemporary Northern Ireland from the perspective of a young Asian person

#### **Outcomes:**

- Production of script at Indian Community Centre
- Showcase performance of script at Indian Community Centre (nearly 300 people in audience)
- School workshops leading to schools performance on same night at Indian Community Centre
- Final Performances (free entry) over two nights at the Waterfront Hall Studio
- DVD of performance

#### **Intangible outcomes**

##### Workshops promoted:

- internal discussion of stereotypes through characterisation
- theatre as an art form
- interculturalism (opening doors to understand difference/otherness)
- laughter: validation through humour, of making meaning; cultural specific contexts are read differently by audiences depending on ethnic and cultural background.
- cultural knowledge transfer
- performance skills
- a development of sense of identity and the capacity of groups involved
- the creation of a new script based on authentic experiences of participants
- the establishment of new creative partnerships

##### Staged performances contributed to:

- the creation of a memorable event for audiences
- an opening of venues previously considered 'closed to access' for ethical or cultural reasons
- building of confidence through performing in a high profile venue (shift from community centre to dedicated theatre space)

##### Theatre as an art form enabled participants and audiences to:

- learn to know themselves better by identification in the mirror of performed characters
- meet, share and experience other cultures and traditions
- regard difference as creative and positive
- expand knowledge and awareness of a sense of otherness



### Project Partners:

**Indian Community Centre**<sup>16</sup>, Belfast, a voluntary organisation, working *‘towards the promotion and greater understanding of Indian Culture and Traditions in Northern Ireland.’*<sup>17</sup>

**Tinderbox Theatre Company** based in Belfast was established 1988. It is an independent theatre company ‘dedicated entirely to new writing for the theatre, the playwrights who create it, and the environment in which it takes place.’<sup>18</sup>

**Wheelworks**, *‘exists to provide artistic and creative opportunities to young people and is experienced in outreach’*<sup>19</sup>

**ArtsEkta**<sup>20</sup> – the first arts based organisation to provide the display of Indian and other ethnic arts within the North and South of Ireland

### Funding:

Community Relations Council (CRC)	
Interculturalism Grant	£10,000
Rayne Foundation	£10,000
Awards for All	£10,000
Arts Council Lottery Access Grant	£23,750
Community Foundation for NI	£5,000
CRC Ethnic Minorities Grant	£4,500
Ulster Garden Villages	£5,000
And additional smaller amounts under	£2000
from seven other funding bodies and charities.	
<b>Total Amount</b>	<b>£75,750</b>

### Location:

Indian Community Centre Belfast,  
Waterfront Hall, Studio Theatre

### Timescale:

initiated 2005 – completed March 2007

### Participants and Process:

The Project was 2-staged

**Stage 1** involved Tinderbox and Wheelworks facilitating workshops with young people from 3 secondary schools who, through workshops, created a performance of their contemporary re-interpretation of the classic Indian Tale: Hayavadana<sup>22</sup>. The workshops enabled the participants to interpret and personalise the classic tale through contemporary eyes, by introducing themes of cultural representation and cultural stereotyping with a lighter touch. In parallel to this, twelve young people and five adults from the Indian Community worked on Nisha’s original idea, developing a script through improvisation and discussion. Participants were asked to reflect on their experience of what it was like to live in Belfast and to play with stereotypical representations through characterisation, humour, and colloquialisms. The drama strategy employed a range of exercise and games to develop material. Much of the initial meetings were filled with improvised role play, dialogue and acting. These were recorded and worked into a script. All the verbal material produced during the workshops, including ‘rants’ and ‘off the cuff’ remarks, have become transcribed, These were then brought back to the group for collective decision making, on what was to be used for the script and performance. The strategy involved was empowering to the participants, as it created a sense of being heard and having their contributions taken seriously. It also created many opportunities for reflection and self-reflection.

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All Photography:  
Christopher Heaney

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<sup>15</sup> “Gathering Ground:  
Promoting Good Intercultural  
Practice using the Arts”  
published by Tinderbox Theatre  
Company, Jan 08 (p29)

<sup>16</sup> [www.iccbelfast.com](http://www.iccbelfast.com)

<sup>17</sup> [www.iccbelfast.com/](http://www.iccbelfast.com/)

<sup>18</sup> [www.tinderbox.org.uk](http://www.tinderbox.org.uk)

<sup>19</sup> [www.wheelworks.org.uk/](http://www.wheelworks.org.uk/)

<sup>20</sup> [www.artsekta.org.uk](http://www.artsekta.org.uk)

<sup>21</sup> In this tale a beautiful woman  
comes in between two best  
friends. The heads of the  
friends become swapped and a  
bitter discussion ensues about  
what makes a person who they  
are – the head or the heart?

“Gathering Ground; Promoting  
Good Intercultural Practice  
using the Arts” compiled  
and edited by John McCann,  
Tinderbox Theatre Company.  
Published Jan 08

A showcase performance of Chaat Masala was staged alongside the schools' production in the Indian Community Centre to an audience of friends, family and invited guests. Presentation on stage was a new experience to the majority of those participating.

**Stage 2** was a collaboration between Tinderbox and ArtsEkta. It involved the further development of the Chaat Masala script. Non-Indian community performers joined members of the original cast. The idea was to explore relations between the Indian Community and the wider community. This resulted in a cast of 25 volunteers, necessitating clear time management skills since the only time the entire cast were able to come together was the first day of the performance in the Waterfront Hall Studio.

### **Evaluation:**

Evaluation occurred as part of the normal reporting procedure for funders. Significantly though, Tinderbox has recently completed a publication *'Gathering Ground'*<sup>21</sup> which actively reflects on Chaat Masala in relation to other best practice intercultural projects and on the lessons learnt from such practice in general. This ability to externalise, contextualise, reflect and publicly open up debate is an excellent model of evaluation. But groups such as Tinderbox are also in constant informal dialogue with their audience and participants:

*"The message sent to different communities by this project is to celebrate diversity and also to help abolish ignorance between different religions and communities. We all enjoyed taking part in this project and loved meeting new people. This sent the message to the audience that meeting with different people can also be exciting and fun."*

**Kosaalya Somasundram** (participant)

### **Sustainability:**

Performances are inherently temporary, though they may live on in DVDs or published scripts. But Drama is an intense, self-reflecting process; the experience and memory of which stays with many of the participants/ audiences – and finding ways to connect the experience of Drama to the experience of everyday life is a necessary challenge in order not to 'waste' such effort.











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# Essays

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# On Cultural confinement<sup>22</sup> and playing with the rules

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Doris Rohr

*'I believe in the importance of culture and creativity in supporting the existence of a healthy, democratic and educated society. But my experience shows that not only is it the case that many do not understand its importance but that they also fear these words and the concepts that lie behind them.'*

**Royston Maldoom**

(Consultant Director Dance United Northern Ireland)

Choreographer, artist, writer and social activist Royston Maldoom has worked extensively in socially challenging situations, utilising the creative potential of dance development theatre to build participants' confidence in addressing difficult or unresolved social relationships. The above quote implies a fear of the power of creativity amongst many of us. More so, as anything which can be potentially powerful and difficult to control, there will be specialists in society who maintain that it is their privilege to safeguard and gate keep the values attached to creativity. Unfortunately the specialist position can easily slip into a situation of abuse of power, where those who think they have special access, training and knowledge of the arts and creative processes in a wider capacity, i.e. curators, writers, art historians, entrepreneurs, collectors, teachers, philosophers, and, last if not least, the specialist-educated artists themselves, make creativity a stronghold to which membership alone gives

access. As a result creativity ceases to remain an innate resource to all of us and ceases to benefit the whole of society.

The critique of the gatekeepers of creativity has been conducted on many different levels. On one level the art brut and outsider art movement<sup>23</sup> have started to pull down the boundaries between non-trained and specialist art school-trained creativity. Artists themselves have found reasons to question the status quo and the establishment of privileged art circles, and this type of internal critique would have found expression in artists boycotting institutions associated with establishment, and developing their own sites for showing their work and sharing it with a different type of public. It would be beyond the scope of this essay to give a comprehensive break down of the range and diversity of such anti-establishment demonstrations in the history of art. However, one factor remains congruent in the attempts of artist, makers and creative thinkers to develop new possibilities to engage with the public: the need to de-throne those who are in privileged positions of power to decide what is art and what is not, what is good and what is bad, what is creative and what is not creative.

It may sound far-fetched to quote an American land artist, Robert Smithson, yet the land art movement in the 1960s and 1970s has strongly contributed to a broader understanding of what art means. Most importantly it moved art outside the white-walled museums of fine art, and brought it into the landscapes and townscape of America and Europe, making art publicly more visible. The sculptural and architectural qualities of much land art contributed significantly to a broader understanding of art in the public realm. Perhaps, most interestingly for me, however, is that Smithson's critical voice<sup>24</sup> remains so acutely relevant today:

*The function of the warden-curator is to separate art from the rest of society. Once the work of art is totally neutralized, ineffective, abstracted, safe, and politically lobotomized it is ready to be consumed by society. All is reduced to visual fodder and transportable merchandise. Innovations are allowed only*

*if they support this kind of confinement.'*

**Robert Smithson**, Artforum, New York, October 1972

Smithson's art practice drew attention towards suburban and remote landscapes – un-idealised, non-pretified and non-cherished – the wastegrounds, as locations to test process, radical making and uncompromised thought. Is it possible to make a leap here away from Smithson to the environment and context of non/community of the contested spaces of Northern Ireland?

Community appears a profoundly mis-used term to me. The term community is rooted in collective, non-material and spiritual situations of a group of people who share a set of values, often indicative of a belief in a higher power or an ideology that questions materialism. Historically many communities were founded out of a need to distribute material goods, spiritual enlightenment and knowledge on equal terms with others. This applies to early socialist developments like those devised by Robert Owen<sup>25</sup>, but goes back much further in time, and can be found in monastic developments across denominations and around the world. The word community has become inflated in the context of historical and contemporary social tensions in the north of this island, assuming oversimplified stratification of values and beliefs according to quasi-ethnic lines of monitoring diversity. The use and meaning of the word community has become more imagined<sup>26</sup> than real.

Social reform and creative empowerment have historically become paired up on many occasions. At heart lies the wish to re-empower the human condition by an attempt to un-ravel modernist efficiency of production methods, implying here a non-division of social life and its means of production from aesthetics, and from the community. More recently society's modes of industrial and economic production have become even more alienated from place and conditions of making, let alone "beauty", as western 'post-industrial' economy delegates the assembly type of production to other, assumed less

developed parts of the world. Whereas we, here, if lucky enough to have employment, enjoy the dubious quality of life virtual technology has given to our culture and society.

So perhaps it is not surprising then, that despite their merits, ideas of social and aesthetic reform are beginning to sound tired. Divorcing the term creativity from being inextricably linked to the arts might prove liberating in this context. In other words, whilst the arguments made to empower the individual creatively in societal context remain interesting, it is questionable that this strategy needs to be called art, that it is privileged to the arts; and it is consequently questionable that it is best served through a separatist arts, science or social funding landscape.

The fear of the power of creative process Maldoom referred to above may well have been caused by the privileged status given to creative expression to the arts. Or, perhaps, those fears are generated because creativity does accept rules for finite periods only. Overturning the rulebook seems a stronger component, or inherent aspect to creative thought, than those of artistic expression. Overturning the rulebook does not necessarily mean radical revolutions on a mass scale, nor overt political readings, but the ability to allow individuals or groups in society to come up with the unexpected, to re-invent their roles, to define themselves.

Creativity as a generic term can hold many meanings. Creativity has permutations of free association, spontaneity, non-expectancy, surprise and of questioning systems of order and hierarchies of value. It allows for and welcomes experimentation and is adaptable to change to external or internal circumstances (material, environmental or located within a person). Creativity has undertones of positive change; it may lead to unforeseen solutions to problems, but nevertheless remains open to its sense of purpose and meaning.

Creativity is a survival instinct more than a privilege. It manifests itself differently depending on personality and circumstances - economical adaptation to shortages is often

a trigger for creative innovation. A creative response manifests itself in day-to-day action, when a shortage of ingredient leads to a novel result of a dish, for example. The same applies on a different scale to most of the activists and facilitators featured in this publication, who managed to raise projects on shoestring budgets.

To evaluate holistically the success of creative strategies within a wider spectrum of the arts (for want of a less problematic word) within social contexts, creativity needs to be allowed to transcend narrow criteria of functionality. Metric measurement, used to evaluate success based on competition outcomes, is normatively used to establish priorities and hierarchies of (mis)perceived excellence, best practice and formal recognition (recognition often measured in terms of money, as allocated, as accessed, as given in grant or funding situations). As the status of the arts determines the scale of the underrepresented niche for creative thinking, it is of relevance here to critique the measuring of excellence in such normative and predictable parameters.

Creativity in social contexts interprets the circumstance in which a theoretical experiment becomes limited in scope through ethical necessity<sup>27</sup>. The context determines its potential set of problems. Problems turn a hostile seedbed into a laboratory for creativity provoked by the obstacles it attempts to overcome. Adaptive abilities for survival of species in extreme natural conditions come to mind. Whilst one should caution to glamorise the struggle for survival as a condition for creativity, there appears to be a co-relation between a shortage, a demand, and the spirit of creative intervention. Or perhaps I simply marvel at the tenacity and obstinacy of people who create in the face of physiological and psychological difficulties presented in the environments they chose to work in.

All the case studies presented in this publication draw on creativity in different ways, and none of the work presented here would suffice for an elitist or narrow approach towards creativity. The diversity of case studies included in this



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*Overturning the rulebook does not necessarily mean radical revolution ...but the ability to allow individuals or groups in society to come up with the unexpected, to re-invent their roles, to define themselves.*

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publication reflect and draw on generic properties of creativity in a number of ways through life history telling, acting and performing, as well as through taking part in art workshops, which draw on process and work through physically engaging with materials. Pedagogical insights are implicit in many of the approaches used throughout, and in all case studies there is a strong sense of participants having been able to rediscover themselves, and of having learned to value their abilities and contributions more highly. Facilitators gain insights into developing learning and play environments as part of an overall larger project aimed to increase tolerance or to develop intercultural latitude. Environmental improvements and greater sense of place might be the visible outcome of a project, yet the hidden skills in the processes applied to achieve this aim benefit the participants at least as much. Creativity shows in organisational ingenuity of project managers and facilitators in all the case studies featured, in their astonishing ability to adapt to a confusing and over-bureaucratic funding regime. It becomes clear that there are different registers of creativity and different registers of 'gains' to be made, depending on the perspective of project facilitator, arts facilitator, manager, participant or audience. It would be impossible to list those comprehensively, as the creative gains of projects of the kind featured here are more than the sum of their parts.

In my attempt to locate a common creative denominator within the selected projects, Liberty Consortium's Playtrail appears to be of pivotal importance: creativity makes participants' experience afresh, fun, enjoyable. It links place with activity, and cognitive and habit (body) memory, draws on the concept of play to achieve mental improvement and alertness; it negotiates difference and creates tolerance in a temporary situation of meeting others with different physical and mental ability. The playground serves as a pointer for direction to demonstrate why and how we need to create more environments for creative exploration, learning and work. The use and implications of the word 'play' becomes inextricably linked with the term 'creativity'. In this respect, the following research findings are pertinent to children and adults alike:

*'Play facilitates children's holistic development incorporating areas such as physical literacy, cognitive skills and creativity.'*

**Prout, A.** (2005) *The Future of Childhood*,  
Abingdon: Routledge Falmer

*'Play is important for the development of brain capacity.'*

**Sutton-Smith, B.** (1997) *The Ambiguity of Play*,  
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

*'Play is significant for cultural development and society.'*

**Drummond, M.J.** (2002) *Assessing Children's Learning*.  
David Fulton. London<sup>28</sup>

Play nurtures creative and intelligent development of individuals in social settings, as long as those settings allow for constant reinvention. Fixed settings, spatially or conceptually speaking, create the hierarchies of status, order and predictability of achievement, that camouflage the social Darwinism lurking behind this our supposedly socially dynamic society.

*'[...] I have to rely on my own experience as a teacher and community artist that has demonstrated to me on so many occasions that competition can be an enormous hindrance to individual development. It produces as a by-product many losers, it marginalises those who are unable, or unwilling to compete. [...] There is increasing evidence that even industry and business is beginning to question whether competitiveness is the first requirement for success, and the role of creativity, negotiation and partnership are increasingly being explored.'*

**Royston Maldoom**

*(Consultant Director Dance United Northern Ireland)*

Non-competitive conditions of mutually creative and social engagement underlie the success of all the projects featured here; they offer opportunities to affirm participants' sense of being able to make a unique contribution towards their own environment and the wider world.

Ability, mixed ability, and in particular the contested term *disability* – this censored 'politically incorrect' word - features much in our culture and society across the board. If creativity really remains the privilege of those who are successful, who get the grants, or become famous, then we remain a disabled society in dire need of playgrounds. More space is needed where non-competitive creative engagement allows us to rediscover our innate sense of creativity. Translate this with ability to make positive change in our own life, and it is not difficult to realise that this potential has become curtailed and has become relegated to 'professionals' and specialists, who take care of the deprived state of mind and body (our current prevalent social illnesses of depression and obesity go hand in hand with the need to pay the specialists to sort us out, but never quite enough to stop our dependencies). As we conduct our daily lives (at home, at work or at leisure) in environments designed by others according to overriding principles of functionality, our social and environmental surroundings have become repetitive and repeatable, unimaginative and unsurprising – or plainly dysfunctional. Our own ability to think broad, positively, open-minded and laterally has become reduced accordingly. Likewise, we can assume that the straightjacket of not having one's history valued, of not having one's personal story heard, will continue to dwarf and stunt growth in those living side by side in a society coming out of conflict and violence, and will continue to foster disrespect and intolerance to difference. Affirming a sense of identity and belonging through creative processes, forms part of a successful strategy of implementing creative solutions to a complex social and political field. By allowing individuals to remember their part of the story, which will remain shareable only ever to some degree, it will become a story with parallel and oblique lines and lives, plots and endings, open to interpretation, identification or disagreement.

Creative energy paired up with tenacity have allowed committed individuals to create conditions for creativity to flourish, despite difficult funding conditions, lack of continuity and security, and in the face of political, aesthetic

and social prejudice or dogma. The case studies featured here have worked because they have enabled participants to become co-deliverer of a project. They have worked out because individual organisers, managers, directors or visionaries, have had the grace to withhold claims of creative superiority of their own aesthetic judgements, to enable others to achieve and recognise theirs at their own place and in their own time.

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<sup>22</sup> The term cultural confinement is graciously borrowed from Robert Smithson's seminal, classic and never-dating text "Cultural Confinement", Artforum New York, October 1972. New games, old rules – so it seems.

<sup>23</sup> Lesa Moriarity's website on art brut (2007) which gives history, context and acts as education resource list for educational workshops, is as good introduction to this area as one can get. It's fun! <http://www.artbrutedu.exhibit905.info/>

<sup>24</sup> Smithson, one amongst many artists who were unhappy with the straightjacket that term can apply. Other areas which come to mind here are the 19th C Art and Craft Movement, with its key representative reformer, artist and designer William Morris, who wanted to allow people to have

beauty in their homes and their work advocating a return to non-alienated methods of production where a worker could see through a process from beginning to end. The German 20th C artist and social dreamer Joseph Beuys contributed to the debate by introducing the concept of 'social sculpture', a concept that mirrors the sentiments voiced by Morris, by demanding to make it possible for everyone to contribute to society in a holistic way, drawing on the innate capacity of creative abilities in mankind (Harrison/Wood (eds) (1992) *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, Oxford: Blackwell: 890ff).

This line of argument has been extensively commented on by Suzi Gablik (Gablik (1991) *The Re-Enchantment of Art*, New York: Thames and Hudson).

<sup>25</sup> [www.britannica.com/eb/topic-436254/Robert-Owen](http://www.britannica.com/eb/topic-436254/Robert-Owen)

<sup>26</sup> The concept of imagined community is based on communities being established indirectly, via concepts, theories, artificial or virtual meeting places, through media etc, rather than in pre-modern face-to-face settings. It is borrowed from Benedict Anderson, 1991 (revised edition), *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso Books. See also <http://www.culcom.uio.no/aktivitet/anderson-kapittel-eng.html> for an interesting interview on concept of nationalism in relation to community.

<sup>27</sup> The Milgram experiment would be a relatively extreme example of a scientific experiment, which attempts to de-contextualise brutality and violent behaviour by putting human behaviour into 'clean' laboratory conditions to test the experiment.

Simulation has created an artificial setting which may well distort the value of the data used, even if often quoted to disillusion belief in humanitarian values. (<http://www.new-life.net/milgram.htm> and <http://psychologytoday.com/articles/pto-20020301-000037.html>)

<sup>28</sup> All three quotes can be found in the Information Paper Play Policy for Northern Ireland: [www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/play-policy.pdf](http://www.allchildrenni.gov.uk/play-policy.pdf)

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# Wembley Tunnel:

the artist role in a critical context

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*Ciara O'Malley*

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*... it is important to maintain a level of objectivity and professionalism in such a highly polarised environment if you do not wish to be viewed as either a 'them' or an 'us'...*

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The 'Smile Mile' was the first major project I undertook as Artist in Residence at Her Majesty Prison Maghaberry for the Prison Arts Foundation Northern Ireland. It ran from June 2006 to October 2006 and culminated in its' official launch in December 2006. HMP Maghaberry is Northern Ireland's largest prison and remand centre. Prior to this residency, I had no experience of working in a prison community.

I spent the first six weeks of my year-long residency networking and establishing working relationships with prisoners, the Education Department, Governors, the Trades/ Estates Department, Prison Officers, Security, the Hospital, the Visitor's Centre and the Family Officers.

Part of my brief as resident artist was to work with the communities at Maghaberry to identify areas of the prison where arts based projects would be of most benefit to inmates and staff. I am also employed to co-ordinate and manage arts projects across the prison.

Both prisoners and staff identified several areas of the prison. We decided to focus on 'The Wembley Tunnel,' which is one of the main arteries of the prison connecting the prison communities with the hospital and the visitor centre. Wembley Tunnel became the exhibition area for an installation piece produced by the prison community eventually entitled 'The Smile Mile.' The prisoners were the creative force behind the installation. Where and when appropriate, I would bring in creative practitioners to support specialist aspects of the work. My role was, and remains, to facilitate, guide and co-ordinate projects and act as a catalyst. I have always tried to maintain full participation and inclusion at all stages of a project and the prisoners involved in 'The Smile Mile' installation were no exception.

It is also important to point out that any major art project within the prison could not take place without the hard work, support and input of the aforementioned employees and departments in the prison. There are inherent problems at the

interface between groups of prisoners and the representatives and employees of the institution in which they are incarcerated. These include deep seated and institutionalised attitudes on both sides of the divide that can prove difficult to surmount but that can also sometimes prove positive and augment the development of a project. For example, all of the prisoners involved doubted the installation would get off the ground as there seem to be too many things not being allowed by the prison authorities.

There were also, and continue to be, security issues at every stage of this and other arts projects within the prison. This is inevitable when working in any kind of secure environment, not least a Category A, or maximum security, facility. Everything from the timing of the group sessions with the prisoners to the materials used, the positioning of the pieces and the way they were hung were all, by necessity, subject to approval by the Security Department. Many issues throughout the course of the project caused concerns but I received a great deal of commitment, enthusiasm and support from prison staff at the outset. I also experienced some resistance from staff and prisoners alike.

Initially, the project had the working title, 'The Green Mile,' which is the prisoner's nickname for The Wembley Tunnel in reference to its colour and, most likely, to the Hollywood prison drama of the same name. Many of the participants were not familiar with the notion of a site-specific installation so time was spent exposing the group to examples of such work. The installation was designed to be fluid and organic, in that, once the means of display had been security cleared and vetted, work could be modified and developed using similar or different themes but using the same tested means of display. The Smile Mile developed into an installation of approximately one hundred MDF boards of assorted sizes depicting images of Northern Irish culture, art, people and places overlaid with text which reflected prison humour, Northern Irish humour, colloquialisms and thought provoking poems, all of which were contributed by prisoners by means of a prison wide trawl.

After many sessions and once the final pieces and texts had been made and selected by the prisoners, I brought in Lucy Turner, a print specialist to work with the prisoners in screen-printing the images and texts onto the boards. The images and texts threw up some controversy and some humour. 'No bail, just jail,' 'You're as useful as a blocked shuck,' 'On yer bike, ye gob shite,' 'Now you know the road, don't be a stranger' and 'May your roof never fall in nor those under it fall out' are but a few text examples that made the installation. There were several that didn't, for the most part due to their reference to drugs and drug culture, which was not considered acceptable for display in this institutional environment by the prison management.

I think it is important to maintain a level of objectivity and professionalism in such a highly polarised environment if you do not wish to be viewed as either a 'them' or an 'us' and if you wish to achieve the level of trust and respect necessary to expedite and develop arts projects and endeavours.

In conclusion, 'The Smile Mile' was a success in that it did help to transform many of the participants' ideas, preconceptions and prejudices about what art and creativity are. For many it introduced a fresh perspective and for others completely new ones. It acted as a good starting point and springboard for further initiatives that have since taken place within the prison and all, I feel, enjoyed a shared sense of achievement at the formal opening of the installation.

I think it best to end with a quote from a prisoner who, when asked at an interview by BBC Radio Ulster Arts Extra, 'What did you get out of the Smile Mile?' replied:

*'It takes me away, so it does. When you get so wrapped up in it, it gives you tunnel vision and that's all you want to do, nothing but art.'*



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# 2-dimensional/place /memory and some essential elements

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*Ruth Morrow*

This publication set out to make explicit the link between creativity and the transformation of individuals and groups. A number of the case studies however also illustrate how environmental transformations can ensue. This essay aims to show the opportunities that such incremental and sustained environmental grass roots activities can offer in an interwoven process of physical, social and economic development.

One case study in particular (Springhill Art Trail) illustrates some of the steps and processes of a community learning to respond proactively and positively to its environment. It is interesting to note the different categories the projects fall into- between 2-dimensional and place making.

- In-situ 2-dimensional images (murals, mosaic cross) on pre-determined sites (gable-end walls).
- 2-dimensional images (plaques) and 3-dimensional objects (stone bench) that were deliberately sited within the area and with a relationship to the local environment (bench to mountain view).
- Objects/images that have a relationship of one to another. This relationship created a spatial sequence and hence the art trail.

The projects did not occur strictly in this chronological order and it is important to note that no one activity was of any greater significance than another in the process of developing an art trail. However, there is a natural progression in scale,

associated skills and ambition that has led to the point, where community members are now aiming to develop a community garden.

Regardless of whether the activities were 2-dimensional, 3-dimensional objects or spatial, all of the activities were linked at some level to the community's awareness of the local environment. The first mural served to cover an ugly wall and the bench was orientated towards the Black Mountain, reflecting the community's appreciation of the mountain's beauty and their growing opposition to the ongoing quarrying.

It is interesting also to consider the perspective of those involved in this process. It seems to move from the introspective position of the community looking at the image (mural) or the object (bench); to the extrospective position of understanding how the image, object, space and, by association, the community is viewed by others. (Both the Springhill Art Trail and Dundarave's Alphabet Angel are now promoted as part of regular tourist routes.)

The progression from 2D to 3D to Space implies a movement from shorter term and lower risk projects to longer term and higher risk. Once a project becomes 'spatial' those involved have to tackle issues such as: Ownership- who legally owns the site and who has stakeholder ownership over it; Statutory Frameworks- what and from where do permissions need to be sought; Responsibilities- who is responsible for long-term maintenance and liability, etc. Tackling such challenging matters develops a growing understanding of how public, private and community worlds intersect and the necessity to define and hold the community position within such a landscape. Making space is a complex and highly significant process but the case studies included here illustrate the latent drive amongst communities to affect environmental change.

In Northern Ireland we understand the potency of 'space' and how it can become highly territorialized and divisive, provoking insecure and, at times, primal reactions. It is precisely because it can go so wrong that any opportunities that allow

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*Space becomes place not just by being used  
but also by being habitualised and ritualised*

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communities the chance to gradually address their own environmental needs are essential.

A central argument for communities engaging in such creative environmental practices, lies in the distinction between 'space' and 'place'. Built environment professionals design and build 'space'; however, the nature of exchanges and the level of interaction between people and space define 'place'.<sup>29</sup> Space becomes place not just by being used but also by being habitualised and ritualised. Interestingly some of the case studies in this publication illustrate how that can happen quite serendipitously at grassroots level.

Case study interviewees emphasised the importance of linking time-limited projects into the memories and ceremonies of the community. As Peter McDonald from Groundwork NI pointed out - even the most loved piece of community sculpture will be vandalised within ten years unless the community's link to the object, place etc through ritualised and/or habitualized use, is sustained over coming generations.

In the Springhill's Art Trail, for example, elements are integrated into the community's festival cycle and the stone bench is part of the community's day-to-day 'seating requirements'. A replica of the alphabet angel's face acts as the award in the annual Ulster Scots children's poetry competition. Even in the short time of its existence the Play Trail in Derry has developed an extensive and changing programme of events and community facilities (birthday parties being perhaps the most obvious though with potentially the greatest impact on community memory!).

The case studies also demonstrate that the process of becoming part of the community's memory begins with the opening event. The experience of the launch, the performance- the 'handing over' of the project to the wider community is shared across all the case studies- yet there was a general sense from the interviewees that it is the element least understood by decision makers and funders<sup>30</sup>. The Drama and Dance

Case studies exhibit the greatest awareness of its importance, perhaps because the tangible outcomes of their projects are comparatively fleeting. Mags Byrne (Building Bridges) talks of the importance of not only launching the work to the wider audience but also de-briefing the participants. Over the years they have come to understand the importance of actively managing this post-project experience. Peter McDonald (Alphabet Angel) also talks about the benefits of being able to leave a field worker behind at the end of the project to help the community consider what they have experienced and learnt, and define future actions. It appears then that in a community context, funded projects have a responsibility beyond their official lifespan- a responsibility that one-off, time-limited, product focused funding tends to negate. Of course this is a 'resource issue', but funding projects in a manner that demonstrates no sustainability is similarly a resource issue. If projects were supported to demonstrate strategic consideration of their longevity it might lead to much greater gains.

The final element of a successful project is quite naturally those people involved. Policy makers rightly make every effort to ensure that the Arts is 'for all'. But funding applications steer applicants often unintentionally<sup>31</sup> to a sense that inclusive projects which draw participants / audiences from a wide range of societal groups and cross community have better chance of receiving funding. In contrast, the case studies represented in this publication, for the most part, address very clear and distinct participant groups. Indeed the most successful case studies seem to fall into one or other of the following categories –

- those groups that were linked through place (eg. living on the same street. In Northern Ireland this invariably still means a mono-cultural group) or
- those that were linked by a critical and unique set of needs or identity (disability, behavioural needs, woman associated with conflict etc).

Interestingly, the drama and dance case studies brought together distinct and diverse (culturally diametric) groups to work on same project, but they did so in a managed way with their focus on the group's diversity and potential tensions. Drama and Dance professionals seem to have acute skills in managing the egos of diverse groups – such skill could contribute significantly to the development of shared spaces and inclusive places.

In Northern Ireland, where our communities still live segregated lives, we need perhaps more than most, to evoke such processes that lead to shared civil space. In a well-functioning public realm, public spaces allow us to build ties to each other and also to our institutions. For such spaces to become places, society's interrelationships need to be tested and consummated. In such places we learn to negotiate, confront, address our intolerances, impatience, and honest passions. In such a non-virtual, 'real' place we can read the lie, the blush, the humanity of the other....

And perhaps somewhere down the line, communities, who have learnt from a process of incremental and creative environmental change, can act together with public bodies, private investors and built environment professionals to become the inhabitants and co-producers of those 'civil places'.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> People Make Places: Growing the public life of cities. DEMOS Think Tank, commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Trust, 2005

<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, the formal evaluation report of 'Creating Common Ground' programme (available at [www.nihe.gov.uk/publications/reports/ccgfinalreport.pdf](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/publications/reports/ccgfinalreport.pdf)) identified that 'Having a formal end event to celebrate' contributed significantly to the success of the programme.

<sup>31</sup> ACNI funding applications ask for demographic breakdown of participants – this information is not used to access applications but rather to provide figures for ACNI reports

<sup>32</sup> This essay draws on ideas first discussed in the essay People and Place in McFadden, M and Morrow, R (eds) Your PLACE or mine: PLACE review book. PLACE, Belfast 2008

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# The Art Of Working Politically

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*Declan McGonagle*

When the artist Thomas Hirschorn said that his task, as an artist, was 'not simply to make political art but to make art politically' he identified a crucially important and defining aspect of contemporary art practice where questions of context, engagement and participation arise.

I would argue that to 'make art politically' is to make art without innocence of the relations within which art and artists function and without the pretence that art and artists can occupy a neutral position, apart from socio/cultural/economic power relationships in social space[s]. Art becomes then a means of engaging, naming and articulating those relations.

To make art politically is to take responsibility for practice in a particular setting, whether enacted in the critical or commercial marketplace of, what is called, the art world, and/or the transactional marketplace of civil society and the social environment in which artists [and curators] attempt to construct and project meaning.

The challenge here, which has now been taken up by a range of contemporary practitioners and, significantly, by some theorists, is to reconnect the meaning of art practice to the meaning of lived experience. And this is not about creating audience, it is about transforming consumers into participants, or more usefully, creating the conditions where consumers can transform themselves into participants in the culture.

It is also about situating practice in a way which forces the issue of naming continuities in human culture – what human beings make and do to add value to the quality of their lives – which are usually unnamed and therefore invalidated by the critical apparatus of the art[s] sector. It is only out of this sort of [re]negotiation and [re]naming that new forms of practice and experience will be generated and sustained into the future.

When this approach is proposed and argued for, in practice, it is regularly resisted by some within those relationships of power, firstly, as no more than community arts and, so, already defined and provided for and, secondly, that such a reconnection would, inevitably, undermine the 'true' nature and purpose of art. This, of course, presumes and pretends that the nature and purpose of art is fixed - within a Modernist narrative - and that, having reached that high ground, it should not be surrendered. Two key points have to be made in response to that defence. The first is that those dimensions



of new practice which set out to engage, reconnect and name those continuous activities designed to add meaning and value to human experience are qualitatively different from those which have already been named, and critically marginalised, as community arts. Though aesthetically similar, they are ethically different in intention and purpose. This area of practice sets out to articulate a field of reciprocal rather than rhetorical relations. The second point is that the defence of this particular 'high ground' represents a highly selective and short term view of the nature and purpose of art in human culture, defined within the Modernist narrative of inevitable progression, as historicised in the period from the Renaissance to late 20th century in Western societies.

What is actually needed, in my view, is a wider and longer-term view of art within the ground of human culture. The result of panning back, of widening the lens, is a loosening of inherited constraints on definitions of practice, the development of inclusion and collaboration and also porosity. A fundamental difference, also, between the norms of community arts practice and the 'new' practice - and why it is realised and theorised differently - is that the reason that community arts, as we have known its modes of access and participation over the last thirty years or so, has never been able to move from the margins to the centre of the culture is because the sector did not address the means of distribution. As a sector it may not have concerned itself with the means of distribution because it was so focused on the means of production, but it is the means of distribution which, in Western culture, still confers value on art[s] activity.

Distribution mechanisms - galleries, museums and theatres and other institutional sites of experience - reflect what are still powerful, albeit now contested, models of conferring value. These models of practice are premised on a genius producer [the artist], a passive consumer [the non-artist] and an autonomous art 'object'. Happily for some, this model also requires mediation and therefore privileges the gatekeeper roles of curator and critic. It is not just the vested interests of economic exchange that maintain this particular model.

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*.. for art to be understood... not as  
a decorative antidote to reality but  
as one means of comprehending  
and transforming it..*

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The result is disempowerment and it works both ways, for artist and for non-artist and has not, we can now say, been successfully challenged by the community arts model. And this despite the considerable efforts of many individuals in that sector, who, typically, tended to suffer burn-out eventually.

The more recent emergence, not only of new art practice but of a support discourse which has named and made visible a range of negotiations and engagements between art/artists and lived experience, civil society processes and public space can be made to represent [in Hirschorn's terms] a politically strategic, rather than an aesthetically tactical, reconfiguration of relations in the social field.

It is in this sense that I argue for art to be understood - as it has been over the longer term, anyway - not as a decorative antidote to reality but as one means of comprehending and transforming it, also as a means of taking responsibility for positions occupied in social space. That process of transformation, if premised on the negotiation of a new deal between art/artist and society, in an enlarged and renamed field of relations, can be acted out productively in traditional or non traditional participatory and experiential settings and formats. Art can be one of the ways to take responsibility for any of a range of positions, at any given time, in any given situation, in relation to other positions and other responsibilities rather than disclaiming such responsibilities and pretending to be innocent of those interdependent relations. This is simply to admit that there isn't, nor should there be, any place for art to hide.

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# Transforming Learning through Critical Reflection

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*Rosemary Moreland*

## Introduction

Learning happens in many different ways, throughout our lives, consciously and sub-consciously. Formal education tends only to be concerned with what has been deliberately learned, even though the vast majority of learning is sub-conscious, much of which occurs through experience and is connected to forms and manifestations of creativity. This essay deals with a creative approach to formal education, which focuses on experiential learning as the central means of enabling adults engaged in the community and voluntary sectors to stimulate their creative engagement and transform their learning experiences into learning credits, gaining them access to a degree programme.

## Lifelong learning

Like creativity, lifelong learning is not a new concept and although there has been much debate surrounding its definition, recent and current literature generally restricts its interpretation to that of adult learning, in formal, non-formal and informal settings. In recent years government policies in the North and South of Ireland have pushed a lifelong learning agenda, as a means of ensuring a well-trained workforce and adaptive adult population, in the face of rapid technological change (Department of Education NI, 1999; Department for Education and Employment, 1998; Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1999; Further Education Funding Council, 1999; Department of Education and Science, 2000; Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2002). Increasingly, the boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning have become blurred, particularly as the partnership model is everywhere lauded as best practice. It is an approach that is well suited to adult education and has been welcomed by the voluntary and community sectors (although not without criticism, see for example, Powell and McGeoughan, 2004).

## Valuing Experience – transforming learning into credits

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is based on principles of lifelong and life-wide education, which recognises that people learn in a variety of ways, in formal, non-formal and informal settings throughout their lifetimes and that credits should be awarded for learning that is demonstrated

as relevant and appropriate. APL includes certificated and non-certificated learning or may be abbreviated as APCL (which refers specifically to Accreditation for Prior Certificated Learning). Accreditation for Certificated, Non-Certificated and Experiential Learning will depend upon the relevance of the topic to the course against which accreditation is sought. Applicants for a course will need to demonstrate that their learning is at a level similar to that of the course against which they are seeking to make an APL claim. APL is becoming increasingly recognised and accepted by formal educational institutions. It is appropriate for any accredited course, but is restricted to those who have already gained some experience in the area.

## Learning in the Community

Community work originated in Britain in the 1960s, as “a process of involving people in experiences from which they will learn ways of enhancing their capacity for self-directed activity” (Biddle, 1968). Jackson (1970:157) outlined the learning component of community development in the following way:

“...methods of instruction and subject material to be learned rarely fit the pre-defined categories of teachers and course administrators. Groups of ‘students’ develop at their own pace, in unpredictable directions which cannot be pre-defined by the teacher or administrator of formal courses”.

For many community development workers and volunteers, APL can short-circuit the meandering and often circular paths of training and education, by using knowledge that they have gained through experience or other courses, to gain credits towards or exemption from all or part of a current course. The emphasis is on the learner to produce evidence of learning that is relevant and appropriate to the level at which they are currently studying. However, course tutors, formal education providers and awarding bodies need to ensure that policies and practices of their organisations allow for and indeed encourage applicants to make APL claims.

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*...encouraged to challenge hidden assumptions, both within the community sector practice, as well as theories and models that are presented within the areas of study.*

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The APL Short Course for Community Practitioners at the University of Ulster enables participants to develop an understanding of how to critically reflect on their learning experiences in the community and voluntary sector and how their previously acquired certificated learning can contribute towards their portfolio. The course has been run over ten weeks (one evening per week) in community centres as well as an intensive one-week full-time programme, at the University. Both modes have been successful, each creating their own dynamics. As every participant has a very individualised profile, space is made within the programme for one-to-one advice with tutors.

Since the introduction of the APL Short Course for Community Practitioners in September 2005, over seventy participants have successfully completed the short course and portfolio and thirty-five participants have entered the BSc (Hons) Community Development through this route. All of the participants are adult students; whilst some may have gained qualifications in other areas, the vast majority have left school with few if any qualifications. They have often taken part in many of the myriad of community-based programmes that exist in the community sector; however, most never dreamt that they would be capable of completing a university degree.

One of the main success factors in this programme lies in its underlying ethos, based very much on the Freirian principles of 'starting where people are' (Freire, 1972). In each unit of study students are encouraged to reflect on their experience, to learn from each other's experience, as well as critically reflecting on new models and ways of working. They are encouraged to challenge hidden assumptions, both within the community sector practice, as well as theories and models that are presented within the areas of study. The underlying ethos of the course therefore is premised upon Brookfield's (1997) notion of the reflective practitioner, capable not only of managing the community sector, but of leading it and challenging, as well as contributing to policy in this area. The APL Short Course for Community Practitioners is an

example of ‘community development learning’, whereby participants are encouraged to apply models and theories to real-life situations and indeed to test the usefulness and reliability of such models and theories, in the light of their experience. A study of learning in voluntary organizations that focused on the relationship between individual and collective learning suggested that there is a strong link between the two and the authors argue that all voluntary organizations are potential *“training grounds for active citizenship”* (Elsdon, Reynolds & Stewart, 1995:148)

## Conclusion

Learning based on experience has long been recognized as an authentic element of adult education. However, this is most common in informal, unaccredited community-based courses. Formal accredited education, with its stated learning outcomes, rigid assessment methods and fixed content rarely takes account of experiential learning, except as anecdotal to the educational journey. The APL Short Course for Community Practitioners encourages participants to creatively build a portfolio of learning experiences that identifies clearly the knowledge and understanding they have gained in the field. Undertaking this programme has been a life-changing experience for many participants, who have become critical thinkers and whose experiences on the course have also enabled them to make changes in the communities where they live and work.

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# How do we know it works?

On the evaluation of creative  
practices in the public domain

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*Kerstin Mey*

*'Culture and place demand our attention not because  
our concepts of them are definitive or authoritative,  
but because they are fragile and fraught with dispute.'*

**Jody Berland** (1997)

When funded projects come to the end of their award period, the question if they have produced value for money arises with inevitability. It is posed by the award body, driven by a governmental preoccupation with accountability, effectiveness and transparency. All funding models have therefore inbuilt more or less rigid and extensive reporting and accounting procedures, which include a final project report as a minimum requirement. Such factual and evaluative statements tend to capture mainly quantitative evidence based on funders' project criteria and (audit) requirements.



Traditionally, impact measurements for the arts including community-based or -oriented projects have focused on quantitative indicators looking at economic benefits, 'user value' and, more recently, social capital generated. Such measurements track the number of participants and visitors (sub-classified according to age and gender and occasionally profession and place) an exhibition or public artwork has attracted, or the number of new business initiatives a new arts venue may have generated in its vicinity and their (prospective and actual) turnover.

Such quantitative measurements have come to be employed as key instruments for the validation of practices. For projects, persuasive and accepted accounts on the effective spend of awards may provide a useful and necessary instrument for leveraging other funds from other sources for the continuation and/or expansion of work or for new work building on the achieved.

To a far lesser extent is project evaluation currently concerned with qualitative evidence of the outcomes and outputs; with the impact and continuing effect of a funded project; and of course, on how the money was spent to change how people see themselves, how they live their lives, how they make sense of the place they live in, what role they seek to play in the groups and communities they are part of and how, as citizens, they engage with society.

Whilst it is reasonable of fund-distributing bodies and individuals to expect and demand information on how their support was put to use, the current progressive audit culture privileges out-put, i.e product, oriented practices and information that can be gathered from them. This information is often only capable of drawing a rather one-dimensional picture of creative engagement. Yet, creativity is a complex and dynamic process that involves people, their reason and emotions, their life experience, their habits and traditions, their specific relation(ship)s, interests, desires and intentions.

Creative participatory processes in particular are concerned with human exchange and interaction, with uncertainty, experiment and risk. They may generate frictions and tensions. They may produce successes and failures simultaneously. They may not necessarily show immediate effects, but stimulate ripples and resonances that may assert a more gradual influence and lead to trans/formations over a long(er) period of time that by far exceeds a project's monitoring and accounting periods. Tracking the impact of creative practices that are generated through community participation, however, is complex as concepts such as quality of life, well-being, neighbourhood renewal, etc. are multi-dimensional.

To be clear, the evaluation of the impact of creative practices on people's quality of life, on community cohesion or urban regeneration – to mention but a few of recent government funding emphases – is critical to substantiate an argument for the value of creativity and the arts in society. Their promotion and adequate support in and beyond financial terms depends on it. In reality, and in spite of the many claims made, very little substantiated and systematic evidence has been produced on the development of social capital, human relationships and civil empowerment, on the public value and on the cultural and economic growth and as well as well-being generated by a stimulation of people's creative potential through dedicated and engaged projects.

More recently, qualitative measurements that aim at gauging the nature, level and depth of experience produced by creative processes and art encounters, have been pioneered. These are mainly applied through questionnaires and surveys – often closed-question self-completion surveys – see Francois Matarasso 'Use or Ornament' (1997) and Galloway, Bell, Hamilton and Scullion: 'Well-Being and Quality of Life: Measuring the Benefits of Culture and Sport' (2006). Yet as Galloway asserts '*while we can construe a relationship between research into the wider social impact of cultural activities and QOL [quality of life – sic] or well-being, the fact is that none of this research has explicitly aimed to investigate the effect of cultural*

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*...for community-based creative processes to demonstrate their beneficial effects, effective instruments to measure their multi-dimensional impact need to be prototyped and tested.*

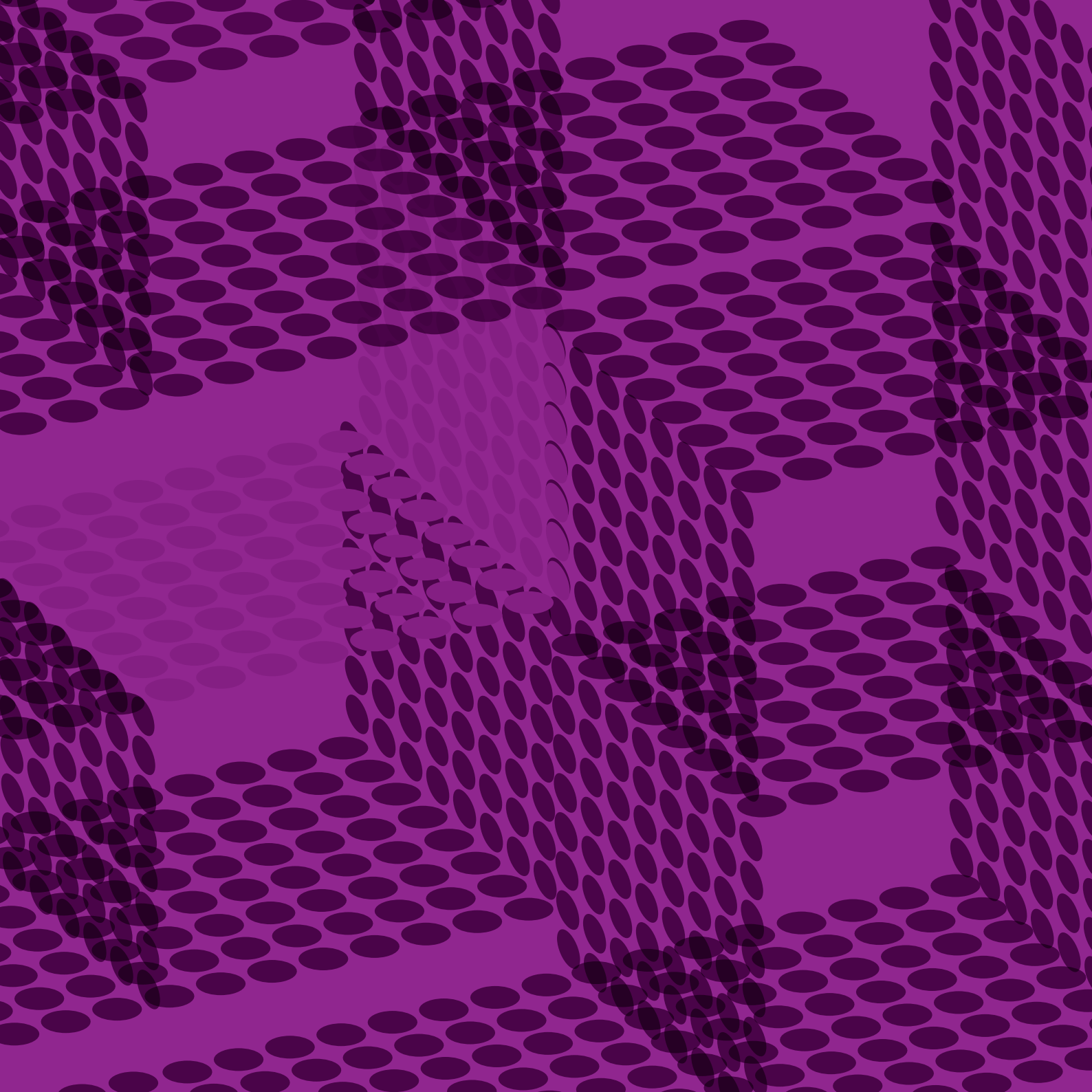
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*participation on QOL ... Lack of research in this area is common to both QOL and cultural policy. The central issue for cultural social impact research remains the lack of both empirical evidence, and the lack of a theoretical basis with which to support the claims about the impact of cultural participation.’ (pp. 41–42)*

In other words, for community-based creative processes to demonstrate their beneficial effects, effective instruments to measure their multi-dimensional impact need to be prototyped and tested. This has serious implications for current funding models and evaluation practices. Cultural policy and community development research needs to be advanced to build a sound theoretical base and methods from which to determine the role, impact and benefits of creative processes in this context. Such research has to establish the theoretical foundations and methodologies that bring together quantitative and qualitative approaches; focus at both community and individual level; and reach beyond anecdotal and testimonial narratives. As such evaluation is processual by nature, it requires a sustained commitment of time and resources integrated in the realisation of creative projects rather than added on intermittently or retrospectively through reporting. Therefore, resources for independent observation, critical exchange with participants, feedback loops and reflection, etc. as part of the ongoing creative practice as well as a longer-term follow-up of participants and impacts – where possible and appropriate – need to be made available as part of project funding schemes. This may perhaps not require as much an allocation of new money for community participation as it sounds, but a considered global restructuring of available funds, and most importantly, a concerted, co-ordinated and coherent effort of funding agencies, public and private, operating in the field, alongside projects for systematic data collation, analysis and interpretation.

Aligned to such reforms, a continuous critical scrutiny and debate of the values on which such, indeed any, evaluation is based and which these affirm – embodied in terms such as quality, success, impact, user benefit – is of paramount importance. What are the criteria on which quality is being assessed? How is the success or failure of the project determined? What vantage points and coordinates are employed: the canon of high art or the level of tensions and conflicts in a specific community? The meaning and value of any practice and its outcomes is determined if not produced by the channels and ways in which they are disseminated publicly. Is the process/work exhibited in an art gallery, discussed in a specialist art journal, the art column of a newspaper or a specific arts programme on radio or TV? Or is it talked about or shown within the circuits of community work or government policy? These circuits of display and debate promote creative engagement as art or social engineering, to put it crudely. Therefore, in order to promote creative participatory and community-oriented practices on their own terms – rather than against imported categories of value such as those of the (post)modernist art establishment – effective channels of distribution and networks of communication need to be generated, which are capable of constituting publics and advocacy. Again, here the funders are being taken to task. They need to carefully and critically re/consider the strategies and schemes; the criteria and language employed, in order to make their support work for those intended; to match their expectations with public perceptions; their laudable intention with real impact.

# Recommendations



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This section sets out recommendations that have evolved during the process of making this publication.

These recommendations represent starting points for further investigation, and most crucially, for debate amongst all the stakeholders; individual artists, community groups, arts organizations, funders and policy makers.

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# 1. Funding

Funding (type, extent and process) impacts on all areas of creative practice. However, there is concern amongst the individuals and groups represented by the case studies, that the current cocktail of funding models does little to intelligently support this area of activity i.e. people centred, engaged, participatory creative practice. Given the importance of this type of practice in achieving Creative Transformations, a rethink in current funding models is therefore recommended:

**A diversity of appropriate funding models should be developed, prototyped and tested that:**

- are able to accommodate the requirements of projects grown in and from communities,
- are suitable to longer-term, complex processes in the public domain,
- allow for observation, reflection and feedback loops, integrated into the project, rather than added on retrospectively.

**Funding schemes should provide incentives for groups in corresponding and overlapping areas of interest to work together, to share and transfer knowledge and skills.**

**Funders with common or complementary areas of interest and commitment should collaborate on shared schemes and portfolios of projects.**

# 2. Evaluation

The case studies illustrate the diversity of evaluation techniques used: formal, informal, ad-hoc, considered, internally and externally facilitated. There is often a sense that there is insufficient time and resources to carry out evaluation. This might be the case for smaller scale projects, but there is also evidence that some groups have begun (sometimes by chance) to recognise the value of reflective practice and build it into their mechanisms. Such groups have moved beyond a form of evaluation that simply confirms *'it is good'*, to one that asks *'how could it be better?'* But rigorous evaluation is also required to provide the much needed evidence of the impact and value of this work.

**A range of appropriate, diverse and flexible forms of qualitative (and quantitative) evaluation needs to be developed and refined, through collaboration between creative practitioners, communities and stakeholders, funders and researchers. Such evaluation should then be used to inform the further development of innovative and effective funding models.**

### 3. Categorisation, Promotion and Memory

This area of creative practice in communities has been sparsely documented and represented. It would seem, however, that one distinctive characteristic of creative practice in Northern Ireland is to be rooted and heavily informed by engagement with communities. If that is the case, then we need to do more to promote the fact that creative practice is strongly related to community and that in turn, community is strongly informed and formed by its creative practice. We recommend that:

**Forms of documentation are promoted that adequately and creatively capture this engaged, participatory and processed-based work.**

**Appropriate archiving strategies are developed that build the memory of and support the further development of such practice.**

**Effective and alternative circuits of debate and display are proactively built to aid the validation of such practices on their own terms.**

**The appropriateness and value of defining this work by such terms as ‘community art’ or ‘art’ is critically examined.**

### 4. Time, Management and Sustainability.

As creative projects in communities move out of the workshop or the community centre, and into the public realm they increase in complexity. Projects that engage with environments or result in public performances increase their visibility and simultaneously increase their liability and the need to consult and negotiate with others. This type of work is as much people-focused as it is project-focused and as such has to be managed with an array of skills. Whilst projects may have clear start and finish dates, ensuring people’s engagement requires ‘lead-in’ times and debriefing periods.

This ‘extra-effort’ typically goes unfunded and undervalued yet ensures sustainability and value for money.

**Grass roots organisations need support in developing basic financial, risk and project management skills.** Lack of skills in these areas can affect an organisation’s creativity and potential to seek funding.

**Lead-in and de-briefing periods to projects need to be more clearly marked out, understood and funded.**

**We need to increase our understanding of how projects can develop and support strategies for sustainability,** i.e. sustaining their value and longevity to the communities they support and who support them.<sup>33</sup>

## 5. A role for Universities?

Currently strategies are developed top-down or bottom-up – both offer limited scope, application and benefits. There needs to be reconciliation between community requirements and government initiatives to foster initiative, inclusiveness, ownership, sustainability and maximise benefits for all involved. Universities can offer a site for reflection and reconciliation, where ideas can be tested at low risk and informed by current discourse. We recommend that:

**Universities should be recognised for the expertise and capacity they can offer practitioners, communities and decision makers through up-skilling, knowledge transfer and research.**

**Training opportunities could be provided to better support community activities** in the form of focused short courses /continuous professional development, summer schools, workshops, masters programmes, PhD programmes, conferences and symposia.

**Academic researchers should become valuable collaborators**, capable of working within a diversity of community contexts and connecting with the range and diversity of stakeholders, thereby complementing and adding to the existing expertise developed within communities.

## 6. Places for Play

Even though this publication discusses creativity in terms of its transformative and hence societal value, it still asserts the right for creative processes and moments to exist outside value systems, '*measurables*' and outcome driven initiatives. Thus the final recommendation is that:

**The systems, processes and mechanisms that claim to support creativity be scrutinised for their ability to allow places for play.**

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<sup>33</sup> Some of the case studies included in this publication offer excellent examples of sustainability (connecting sculptures to community rituals), though much of this seems to be the result of personal commitment and organic development rather than strategic planning.

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# Index



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# People

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**Mags Byrne** has been working in dance professionally for over twenty-six years. She has performed with many contemporary dance companies and mounted projects throughout Britain and Ireland and internationally in South Africa, Romania, Indonesia, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Ethiopia. Based on a fundamental belief in the intrinsic value of dance both as an art form and as a social activity Mags works with people of all ages and ability levels and is currently the Artistic Director of Dance United NI. Over the past five years the Company has gained a reputation for its work at the cutting edge of dance and social and community development where it constantly pushes the boundaries of where and with whom dance has value. It has delivered a challenging programme of projects in schools, prisons, young offenders institutions and community settings across Ireland, the UK and internationally. Dance United NI promotes dance for development as a process of great transformational potential producing long-lasting social and personal change in those taking part as well as in those witnessing it. It's stated aim is to advance dance as a tool for personal development and social change.

**Heather Floyd** is the director of the Community Arts Forum (CAF). She has worked at CAF for the past eight and a half years. CAF has been delivering a programme using the arts to address the legacy of the conflict for the past two and a half years. Heather has been interested in this area of work for the past 12 years. *A Woman's Part* was a culmination of this work, building on her previous learning. Before she joined CAF, Heather worked at Shankill Women's Centre for seven years as education



and programme manager where she was responsible for the centre's educational and cultural programmes. This included an in-depth cross border programme between women from the Shankill Road and women from Tallaght in Dublin which she organised. This exchange included three residencies every year and classes during term times. The project culminated in a sculpture located in Co. Leitrim. While at Shankill Women's Centre, Heather also organised a series of cultural awareness and diversity programmes and Irish history, culture and language programmes. Heather is very interested in work which helps post conflict societies to deal with the past. She believes the arts are a powerful tool to help people and communities come to terms with the trauma of the conflict and move forward as a society.

**Claire Hackett** has been working in the fields of conflict resolution and dealing with the past at Falls Community Council for the last seven years. She helped to set up the Dúchas oral history archive which records the experience of the conflict in West Belfast. Claire is currently the research co-ordinator of the Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium which has been developed from grassroots republican and loyalist interface work and is based at Falls Community Council and Intercomm. Claire is a member of the Board and chair of the storytelling subgroup of Healing Through Remembering, a broad based organisation that focuses on dealing with the past relating to the conflict. She has been an activist in the women's movement for over twenty five years. Claire is committed to processes of conflict resolution which work through the past to create the future. 'I believe that we are living in a transitional period where the choices we make now are crucial to the future. The past cannot be undone but it can be dealt with in a way that acknowledges the loss and the harm and abuses inflicted. This can support the transition to a just society. In all of this work the role of grassroots activists is critical.'

**Maureen Harkins** has been involved in community theatre practice for 14 years in performing and producing plays as an active member of Ballybeen Community Theatre and the wider community theatre movement. She is currently employed as development officer at CAF. Maureen is a founder member and former chair of the First Belfast Ulster Scots Festival and is current chair and founder member of the Arts for Older People Network.

**John McCann** is the Outreach Director for Tinderbox. He studied in Birmingham (BA (Hons) Drama and Theatre Arts, Uni of Birmingham), subsequently PGCE / teacher training with Uni Central England); followed by one year voluntary work in Corymeela (Antrim/NI). He is interested in theatre which addresses what is suppressed, unsaid, what is regarded as not so important, and in semiotics, Questions which drive the productions of plays are: why does something work in a cultural context, how does it translate?

**Declan McGonagle** is Professor of Art and Design, and Director of Interface: Centre for Research in Art, Technologies and Design, at the University of Ulster. After working and exhibiting as an artist he was appointed as first Organiser of the Orchard Gallery in Derry in 1978. His subsequent practice as a curator has included the ICA in London and first Director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin. He has also directed independent projects, such as the First Tyne International – A New Necessity [Gateshead/Newcastle upon Tyne] and has initiated a range of innovative Public Art and Community and Education programmes. He was Irish Commissioner for the 1993 Venice and 1994 Sao Paulo Biennales and has served on many Boards and Irish Government cultural bodies. In 2004 he completed the Civil Arts Inquiry, an organizational and sectoral review of participatory art[s] practice for City Arts Centre, Dublin. He has been Chair of the Board of the Liverpool Biennial since 2001.

**Deirdre Mackel**, Upper Springfield Development Trust (USDT) Deirdre Mackel graduated with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art and a Postgraduate Diploma in Cultural Management (gained through part-time study, whilst working). She has more than 13 years of experience working with the arts and creatively within community contexts, including being artist in residence, taking part in event management and festivals. She has worked for USDT since 1997 and has acted as Arts Programme Manager since 1998. In this post she facilitates on average 7-9 projects a year on an outreach basis, developing and coordinating project work across community and artists, to understand and work with policy/ funding landscape, and to make funding applications. Her Fine Art background gives Deirdre a strong sense of quality yet she believes that it is the lead artist who, through a negotiated work process with the local members of the community, gives shape to the project. Additionally her role involves development and consultation work with other local groups in the area.

**Kerstin Mey** is Professor of Fine Art at the University of Ulster and heads up the strand 'Art and its Location' in Interface: Centre for Research in Art, Technologies and Design there. Previously she has worked in Universities in Germany and the UK. Her research is concerned with engaged and participatory creative practices in the public domain, with an exploration of models of art, hierarchies of value and the ways in which the politics of place and cultural (digital) literacies inform individual and collective identities.

**Rosemary Moreland** is a Lecturer in the Community Studies Unit, School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies, Faculty of Social Studies at the University of Ulster. She has 17 years' experience in the field of community development and community-based education. She devised the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APEL) Short Course in the Community Studies Unit, which she now co-ordinates, as well as teaching on the BSc (Hons.) Community Development. Rosemary has actively worked to establish Community Development Occupational Standards throughout Ireland and the UK. She recently collaborated with colleagues at Interface to devise a Public Art Strategy for Greater West Belfast and the Shankill. Rosemary believes that individuals and communities can make substantial changes to attitudes, beliefs and behaviour, through being given the opportunity to critically reflect upon their own and their community's values, alongside others with different and conflicting values. Whilst it is often a difficult and painful process, the fruits are worthwhile.

**Ciara O'Malley** has worked as a multi-media installation artist since the 1990s. Each installation piece is sculptural in nature and comes to life through the use of sound, light, film or movement. More recently, she has explored art in context and created installations that explore the use of technology with the aim to be multi-sensory or interactive as seen in her recent Dublin Luas Line Commission 'Streets' at Connolly Station – an interactive video/light/sound installation in collaboration with Sven Anderson (digital technologist and sound artist) to be launched in 2008. She has received awards, commissions, and residencies and exhibited throughout Ireland, U.K. and internationally in China, Australia, Japan. Following from a residency in Iceland in 2007 she is presently developing an installation piece titled *Ad fara á Rúntinn* attempting to show this incredible, sometimes unfathomable but quintessential relationship between the land of Iceland and it's people.

**Ruth Morrow** is Professor of Architecture at the University of Ulster, Belfast. She has practiced architecture in Ireland, UK and Germany and taught in schools of architecture in UK and Ireland. Her work evolves from principles of activism and inclusiveness and focuses on the interconnections and potentials between people, place, pedagogy and creativity.

*"As an architect I understand the connection between practice and policy and as such I have followed the development of policy initiatives around Creativity in Northern Ireland as an indicator as to how Northern Ireland might move forward through creativity. The link between Creative Societies and Healthy Economies is well trodden ground but the link between Creative Practice and Healthy Societies remains vague in comparison. As someone who has taught and practiced creativity over many years I have come to understand it as a basic learning block of life and like reading, writing and arithmetic, creativity is a vital keystone to a civilized society. My interest in creativity as a tool to achieve creative and innovative outcomes is mirrored by my interest in how learning to act creatively alters the outlook of the individual. I view learning and practicing creativity as a transformational and life-affirming experience."*

**Mark Roberts** has been Project Manager with Liberty Consortium for the past 4 years with specific responsibility for the development of the Playtrail project. He has worked in the Community & Voluntary Sector for the past 18 years, working for a range of organisations large and small. Previously he worked as a grant assessor for a Big Lottery Funded programme and therefore has the benefit of being *'gamekeeper turned poacher'*. To date Liberty Consortium has secured in excess of £1m for the Playtrail and welcomed over 30,000 visitors in its first year of operation.

Mark says *"To be involved in such a successful project, located in your own backyard brings a great sense of achievement and pride."*

**Doris Rohr** is interested in visual literacy in her practice and her teaching. She has worked at Norwich School of Art and Design, Cumbria Institute of the Arts, and the University of Ulster, as well as in a number of Further and Adult Education organisations. Over the years Doris has been involved in a range of outreach projects, with visual literacy and creative pedagogy at the heart (Big Draw Campaign; Aim Higher Initiatives; workshops in community or art centres). Since moving to Northern Ireland, creative approaches outside mainstream education have become a more prominent area of interest and engagement. Doris is an active member of Array Studios, and is as an Associate Lecturer in Painting, School of Art and Design, University of Ulster. One of her key interests in pedagogy is concerned with developing models of practice which allow for creative fulfilment, and playful learning, outside the domain of competition driven learning contexts. In the ideal world creative approaches would create bridges between art, science, philosophy, religion and society, with lesser emphasis on academic and funding compartmentalisation.

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